

I. INTRODUCTION

Donald G. Bloesch

As we survey the current scene, we see a sorely fragmented evangelicalism. There is a pressing need today for evangelical unity as Christianity faces a world that is steadily becoming more secularized and therefore more hostile to traditional religious values.

It should be remembered that Evangelicalism is wider and deeper than nineteenth-century revivalism. It is even broader than the Reformation, though it was in that period that evangelical distinctives were rediscovered and proclaimed with power and authority. If evangelical fragmentation is to be overcome, we need to recover our historical roots not only in Pietism, Puritanism, and the Reformation but also in the biblical renewal movements prior to the Reformation. Evangelical unity can only be realized if we press for the unity of the whole church under the Word of God, and this means Evangelical-Catholic unity.

Today controversy in evangelicalism revolves around four issues: biblical authority, eschatology, election and reprobation, and the gifts of the Spirit. Epistemology, too, figures in this controversy, since one's approach to biblical truth is integrally related to one's theory of knowledge. Those who see biblical revelation as basically, if not exclusively, propositional are inclined to be rationalists in their epistemology. Those who understand this revelation as predominantly historical are more likely to embrace an empirical methodology. On the other hand, those who view revelation as the living God in action disclosing himself and the truth of

his Gospel through historical events as well as verbal concepts and imagery will stress the priority and supremacy of faith over reason.

In the churches today, the breakdown in biblical authority creates both opportunities for evangelicalism and possibilities for new dissension. A critical method that a priori rules out supernatural intervention into human history has served to undermine confidence in the history of the church, since we are living in a different age and must face the challenges that historical criticism presents to the church.

Revelation entails what God has definitively disclosed in the history of the past as well as what he wishes us to apprehend in the present. Evangelicals must firmly resist the tendency in new-orthodoxy to equate revelation with an existential encounter.

Evangelicals should oppose the concept of verbal revelation, which denies the actual entrance of the Word of God into human history and rests the case for biblical authority on the errorlessness or faultlessness of the Bible's language or mode of expression. The inerrancy of Scripture pertains to its teaching authority, not to the impeccability of its text or language.

Of course, the analogy of the incarnation must not be pressed too far when we are dealing with Scriptural authority, since Jesus Christ is himself God, whereas Holy Scripture is the creation and instrument of God. Just as Christ was truly human but without sin, so Scripture is truly human but without error in its matter. But just as Christ entered into our limitations, so the Word of God also entered into the cultural limitations and history of the people of Israel.

We must oppose the view of faith as an irrational leap in the dark and the view that identifies it primarily with intellectual assent. Faith is a commitment of the whole person which entails rational understanding. At the same time the object of faith is not directly accessible to human reason, and this means that reason must rise above itself if it is to apprehend the mysteries of God.

Today, there is a need for new statements that will bridge the barriers between the various parties in evangelical Christianity as well as the barriers between Evangelicalism and Catholicism. It is not only the doctrine of Scripture that has become a point of dispute but such themes as the new birth, the mission of the church, the immortality of the soul, the millennial hope, and the reality of hell.

Though our justification is to be attributed to the vicarious, imputed righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, our sanctification is inseparable from a life of love and obedience in the midst of the world's anguish. Only a life that is consonant with our doctrine will make the faith credible in the eyes of its cultured despisers. The social impotence of modern evangelicalism is to be traced partly to its overemphasis on polemics and apologetics and its neglect of ethics, particularly in the social or political dimension. Certainly it is also imperative that we take seriously the call to the Christian life so that the boundaries between the church and the world will again become visible.

The millennium has become a pretext for social apathy in many circles, whereas rightly conceived it could become a catalyst for social change. Eschatology could give a biblical rationale for a revolutionary style of life, but too often it is used to reinforce a reactionary social stance. The Christian hope has been misunderstood to mean escape from the world whereas in its biblical context it should inspire the people of God to battle with the world and triumph over it. The church will regain its social relevance when it recovers an eschatology that gives meaning and direction to the ethical task of the Christian in today's world. Hope and vocation are integrally related, for only those who have hope can overcome and persevere.

Evangelicals must avoid the misunderstanding common in liberal social gospel circles that the dominion of Christ is extended by social engineering. Progress toward

social justice must not be confused with the coming kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is present only where people enter into that higher righteousness, the fellowship of sacrificial love.

II. THE NEW BIRTH
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The Scriptures speak of justification as well as regeneration. Regeneration is the creation of a new heart within man which entails new goals, new aspirations, new power for service. Regeneration does not consist in the alteration of the old nature but in the impartation of a new nature.

Regeneration is also integrally related to conversion. Conversion is the subjective response to God's decisive intervention in man's life. Conversion signifies man's turning to the way of the cross, but he could not turn unless he had already been inwardly liberated by divine grace. Regeneration and conversion signify the coming to faith. Indeed, not one can be born again unless he believes, and if he believes, he is indisputably born again.

One cannot be converted apart from conviction of sin and joy in the Spirit, and yet the essence of conversion is not feeling but the forsaking of sin and the practice of the new life.

The new birth is both an event and an experience, but it is primarily and essentially the former and only secondarily the latter. What is regenerative is the event of the new birth, even though it cannot happen apart from an upwelling of joy and an outpouring of love.

The new birth is not accompanied by rational guarantees, but there are signs which are persuasive to the eyes of faith. Foremost among these are heartfelt repentance for sins, a sense of the love of God and the assurance of salvation which enables one to give praise and pray to God.

The new birth is also attested by the exercise of a new power over temptation and a new love for one's neighbor.

The overall witness of the New Testament seems to be that baptism by itself is not indispensable for salvation, but baptism joined with repentance and faith becomes the means by which people receive the gift of regeneration. The new birth or the baptism of the Spirit is integrally related to water baptism, and yet the two are not identical. That there is a very close connection between the two is attested by our Lord. In our view baptism is the sign and seal of the new birth.

There is only one baptism, and the gift of the Spirit and immersion or sprinkling with water are its two sides. Water baptism is the outward sign; the Spirit is the inward reality. In the New Testament baptism was a public testimony of faith. It is also a means or instrument by which faith is strengthened and even fulfilled. The inward seal is the Spirit himself which is attested by the rite of baptism, the outward seal.

In the case of infant baptism one is baptized toward faith rather than into faith. As John Calvin said, "children are baptized for future repentance and faith." We agreed with Luther that baptism is not completed until that which it symbolizes takes place on the last day, namely, perfect regeneration or glorification.

Since a person is born again only once, baptism does not need to be repeated. To be sure, the spiritual reality may still need to take place even though one is baptized, but the sign has permanent validity, since it has the blessing of both God and the church. It is not baptism by itself that results in salvation but baptism joined to the Word of God and to the faith of the recipient.

Baptism is a sign of God's efficacious grace poured out for us in Jesus Christ and sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is a sign that God elects us before we decide for him, that God's grace is the basis of our decision of faith.

Conversion is a broader term which applies to the whole of the Christian life while the new birth happens only once. Conversion is both an event and a process in that what has been begun must be carried forward and completed. The new birth itself is sometimes depicted in the New Testament as something begun but also continuing insofar as the renovation of human nature must continue.

First there is the pre-Christian stage in which one is encountered by the grace of God and thereby awakened to seek for salvation. It is redemptive grace itself that arouses man and quickens him, grace that comes to him only through the hearing of the Word. The disciples before Pentecost were in this stage. The second stage of regeneration is the new birth in the narrow sense. Here the Holy Spirit enters into our lives and makes his dwelling place within us.

Having been baptized by the Spirit, we must go on to be filled with the Spirit, and having been filled, we must seek to be more deeply filled. Regeneration must continue into sanctification, where we take up the cross and follow Christ in costly discipleship. It will entail new decisions, new dedications which confirm and renew our baptismal decision. Regeneration culminates in glorification, where we are completely transfigured in the image of Jesus Christ. But glorification does not occur until the resurrection at death, and final glorification does not occur until the final resurrection on the last day.

Today, erroneous interpretations of the new birth are surprisingly abundant. On the right there are the dangers of sacramentalism and predestinarianism and on the left, religious enthusiasm and perfectionism.

There are those who interpret the experience of the new birth as so transforming that the Christian is no longer in the state of nature but wholly in the state of grace. They appeal to passages like, "No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God" (1 John. 3:9). While it is true that no one can sin in union with Christ, the irrefutable fact is that time and again we fall away from this union and thereby into sin. We have the power not to sin, but we inevitably, though not necessarily, succumb to the temptation to sin.

In evangelical theology one is neither born a Christian nor grows into Christianity; instead he must be challenged to make a life and death decision. He needs to make a decisive break with the old pattern of living. He must be translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

To bring about the new birth is not within man's power, nor even within the power of the church. The church can only proclaim the Word and hope and pray that the Spirit of God, who alone can penetrate the hearts of sinners, will act in his own time and way. Baptism by water is the sacramental sign of the new birth, but baptism itself does not effect the new birth. Like the Word of God itself baptism can be an instrument of the Spirit's redemptive action, but it is not a precondition for this action.

The new birth does not mean that we should simply sit back and do nothing, it signifies the concrete realization of divine predestination in the lives of the saints. We can earnestly hope and pray for the gift of the Spirit. We can go to the church where the Word is proclaimed, for we have been told that faith comes by hearing. The new birth means to enter into the full dispensation of Christian freedom, yet freedom, true freedom, needs to be constantly exercised if it is to serve the cause of the kingdom.

III. SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS

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In every church and theology rooted in the Scriptures, the call to holiness resounds throughout the Scriptures. According to the Bible only God is holy in the full sense of this word. His holiness is his power, majesty, righteousness, and love. Such holiness has the character of depth and mystery and elicits reverence, awe, and fascination. While God's holiness is realized in its fullness on the plane of humanity only in Jesus Christ, all believers participate to some degree in it.

The Scriptures teach us that the basis of our acceptability before God is not our own holiness but the righteousness of faith in Jesus Christ. The gift of righteousness which is imputed, must not be confounded with the gift of sanctifying love which is imparted.

Though he can withstand and subdue this through repentance and faith, he is always a sinner because he is never freed from the contagion of sin. At the same time the Christian is always righteous because he is covered by the righteousness of Christ through faith. Justification is an act whereby God declares the sinner righteous through faith in the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Apart from an examination of the relation between justification and sanctification, the call to holiness in the biblical sense cannot be adequately understood. Justification in the New Testament has primarily the forensic meaning of being accounted righteous before the divine tribunal. Sanctification means to be engrafted into the righteousness of God. Justification is

imputed righteousness, whereas sanctification is imparted righteousness. In justification the guilt of sin is removed and in sanctification the stain of sin. Justification makes man acceptable to God; sanctification makes God desirable to man. Justification confers a new status whereas sanctification instills in man a new character. As justification is related to faith, so sanctification is related to love. Justification has logical priority over sanctification, since man is justified while he is still in his sins.

It is important to remember that justification and sanctification have both an objective and a subjective pole. The objective pole is Jesus Christ, for he has been made our justification and sanctification. Justification and sanctification have happened objectively for all people, but they have not yet happened in them or to them. All people are claimed for justification and sanctification, but no one is justified or sanctified in fact until he believes.

Christian perfection means freedom from sin as a conscious transgression of a known norm but not escape from the error and frailty that are part of the human condition. Few doctrines have created more divisiveness throughout the history of the church than Christian perfection. Yet it is indisputable that the Scriptures call us not only to seek holiness in our walk of life but also to press on toward the goal of perfect holiness in Christ.

We must first point out that there are two kinds of perfection-that of Jesus Christ in presenting our own position, which is perfect, and that of the Christian, his own works of love, which is forever imperfect. Yet we can speak of a Christian perfection that is possible for the believer-not an ethical perfection but a perfection of faith. Christian perfection is an evangelical, not a legal, perfection. Its measure is faith, not any kind of work, and at every stage it remains dependent on the forgiveness of sins. It is a spiritual maturity reflected in increasing dependence on God and on the merits of Jesus Christ.

Evangelical piety emphasizes a holiness in the world, in contrast to an ethereal mystical spirituality. The world is deemed the theater of God's glory, where Christians are to live out their vocations in vicarious identification with the needs of their neighbors. Discipleship is interpreted not in terms of withdrawal into a cloister but of wounded servanthood, bearing the cross in the midst of the agony of the world.

Though it must be considerably qualified in the light of the pluralistic religious basis of modern industrial nations, the vision of a holy commonwealth is in our estimation still viable . The disturbing thing about Watergate was not just the private immorality, which was rightly denounced by the general populace, but the lack of any comparable outcry against the immorality in the wider public realm as practiced in the higher quarters of the government of that time.

Evangelical piety it does not lose sight of the truth that all social service must be grounded in a life of prayer, while it focuses attention on the agonizing needs of the world . Prayer is the very "soul of faith," and its neglect means the demise of true religion.

It should be noted that Biblical or evangelical prayer differs from the prayer of primitive religion and even from the prayer of mysticism. Five different types of prayer in the phenomenology of religion that Friedrich Heiler mentioned are; *Primitive prayer* is motivated by fear and need and seeks to persuade and even control the divine power or powers for its own purposes. *Ritual prayer* formalizes the spontaneous petitions in primitive religion, but the magical intent is even more obvious. *Philosophical prayer* reduces prayer to resignation or thanksgiving. In *mysticism prayer* becomes contemplative adoration of the infinite, and petition, if it is allowed at all, is seen as a lower or carnal form of prayer. *Prophetic prayer* consists of spontaneous petitions made out of love as well as need and for the purpose of fulfilling God's will in the world.

God's ultimate purposes are unchangeable, but his immediate will is flexible and open to change through the prayers of his children. True prayer is not only resignation and submission but striving with God, pleading with God, seeking to change the ways of God with his people so that his ultimate will might be more surely or fully accomplished.

Evangelical prayer is based on the view that a sovereign God can and does make himself dependent on the requests of his children. He chooses to realize his purposes in the world in collaboration with his people. To be sure, God knows our needs before we ask, but he desires that we discuss them with him so that he might work with us as his covenant partners toward their solution.

True prayer is neither a magic formula nor a therapeutic technique. Rather it is a dialogic encounter with the living God whose Spirit enables us to pray and who prays for us in groans too deep for words when we cannot adequately verbalize our needs. In prayer we do not so much ascend to God as he descends to us and meets us on our level (cf. Isa. 64:1,5). In the outpouring of his Spirit we are enabled to give voice to our complaints and trials and seek for his aid and mercy. We do not tap into spiritual power, but receive power from on high and are therefore enabled to pray from the innermost depths of our being.

Christian prayer is not only private but also corporate, and the latter especially lends itself to set or prescribed forms. Nor do we rule out the possibility that read prayer in a liturgical service, either on the part of the pastor alone or by the congregation, can be genuine prayer if it proceeds from the heart.

Our concern in this section is with worldliness in the church not with holiness in the world. When the church becomes acculturized and secularized, it can no longer penetrate the world as a leaven. Instead, it contributes to the vacuity and dissolution of the surrounding culture.

Worldliness also infiltrates the church whenever a sacramentalist mentality becomes dominant . Here forgiveness is assured through the sacraments without any clear call to repentance or summons to obedience. Worldliness even asserts itself in perfectionism, particularly when those who aspire to Christian perfection fall into the delusion that they have arrive.

Legalism is another form of worldly Christianity. In this heresy one's salvation is held to be conditional upon one's moral rectitude. Holiness is viewed as a human achievement rather than as a gift of God.

The values of the technological society have even penetrated the bastions of conservative evangelicalism, where some of its spokesmen are now advocating a technology of the spirit to inculcate Christian virtues in man by human conditioning.

We must warn against the technological morality which is manifest in the human potential and pastoral psychology movements. When the religious or moral life is based on the techniques of psychology and related social sciences rather than the authority of Scripture and the spiritual wisdom of the church tradition.

Evangelical Christianity stands in diametrical opposition to the technological morality by its insistence that holiness is a product of God's supernatural grace and not of human technique. It is election by grace, not the rational discovery and application of spiritual laws, that places one in the kingdom of the redeemed.

IV. THE CRUCIALITY OF PREACHING

Donald G. Bloesch

"Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Paul thanked God constantly, he told the Thessalonians, "that then you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess. 2:13). He saw himself as under a divine mandate to preach, and he knew that he would fall under divine judgment if he spurned this injunction: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

The preacher should not make a pretense of superior virtue or wisdom but instead identify himself with his hearers as only a sinner saved by grace. He should preach "as a dying man to dying men". The dynamic of the preacher's appeal was grounded in his own experience, though the actual experience was rarely mentioned. At the same time, it was virtually important that there be a certain congruence between the preacher's life and message, since only a person united with Christ in faith and love could preach in the power of the Spirit.

Those who reach the Gospel to bear in mind that they speak not the words of men but the power of God. They should take care not to mingle with the preaching of the Word of God any thoughts of their own. At the same time they must give diligent and reverent preparation to their Sermons, for to preach simply and profoundly requires much study. Only in this way can they make sure that what they preach is the Word of God and not the word of man.

The content of our preaching, should be the announcement of God's grace and judgment which has taken place on behalf of all humankind in Jesus Christ-in his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.

We do not offer people salvation but proclaim a finished work of salvation, in our preaching. Through the word that is proclaimed the congregation receives a practical awareness of a salvation that is already theirs. We do not call our hearers to decision but remind them of God's decision on their behalf actualized in Jesus Christ. This is not to deny that the Spirit of God may reach out through our preaching and effectuate a conversion of life in our hearers, but we ourselves cannot do this or even hope to do this by preaching. Our responsibility is to make known the conversion of all humankind to God that has already taken place in Jesus Christ.

It is imperative that in our preaching we proclaim the whole counsel of God, and this includes the Law of God as well as the Gospel, sin as well as salvation, hell as well as heaven. We should go on to add obedience as well as faith, though not as the condition for salvation but as a practical demonstration of our salvation. The Gospel is not only an announcement of unfathomable grace but as invitation to surrender in faith and repentance. It also includes a call to ethical obedience.

Our position is that through the preaching of the Gospel a new freedom is given which enable the person in sin to repent and cleave to the grace and mercy of Christ. The hearer can make a decision for Christ, though not on the basis of his own power or wisdom. The Holy Spirit is poured out on all who hear the good news of what God has done for us in Christ, but the Spirit can be quenched and grieved by those who taste of its power and then reject the Gospel.

We must preach not only the good news of God's mercy and love but also the bad news of his wrath and judgment on sin. Apart from the preaching of God's holiness and wrath his love is misunderstood as a sentimental love that only soothes instead of the holy love that purifies and

redeems. We should also bear in mind that when we warn of God's coming judgment in our preaching of the Law and Gospel, we must never ignore the complementary truth that God is also gracious and that his mercy is everlasting.

When we preach about sin in the light of God's law, we should not remain with sin in the abstract but also include a condemnation of specific sins. We are thinking of social sins as well as individual sins, for only in this way does our preaching become prophetic.

To preach the whole counsel of God means to apply the Gospel and Law to the whole of life. To preach only sin and salvation is also to ignore the truth that the Gospel answers not only the problem of sin and guilt but also the problem of meaninglessness, which is particularly acute in our time.

The task of the church is to afflict the comfortable by the preaching of the Law and to comfort the afflicted by the preaching of the Gospel. The comfortable are not really afflicted unless the Law is directed to them personally, not only to their individual transgressions but also to their complicity in social and political sin.

In our proclamation of God's law against sin we as preachers must not exempt ourselves from the judgment of this law. A preacher is the mediator of God's judgment and also of his mercy. He may claim to reach with great courage; but he also must recognize how he is himself involved in the sins against which he is preaching. Mercy, humility, and charity must come out of this recognition.

The afflicted should not only be comforted but they should also be challenged to decision and obedience. They should not only be given the promise of the Gospel but also the imperative of the Gospel. We should make clear that salvation is assured not only by the work of Christ but also by the decision of faith made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Salvation turns into

damnation if it is spurned and rejected. But it becomes the wellspring of peace and joy, the balm of Gilead, when it is accepted and appropriated in repentance and faith.

It is not the visual but the aural that is given paramount attention in Reformed worship. Reformed worship is centered about the preaching and hearing of the Word of God. We are here using the word Reformed in its widest sense to include the whole of evangelical Protestantism, the hallmark of which is the appeal to the authority of the Bible over the church tradition and mystical experience. This kind of spirituality was most clearly identifiable in the Reformation and in early Calvinism and Puritanism.

We must not deny the sacraments their rightful place in our reservations concerning formalistic and sacramental worship. The Word and the sacrament are complementary, even though the second is more or less dependent on the first. The Word needs the sacrament in order to become concrete in the life of the congregation. The blessed sacrament should be celebrated frequently, but not too frequently, since sacramental participation in the mystery of Christ's passion and death must be preceded by self-examination and confession of sins. There is also the danger of the sacrament becoming too commonplace if it is celebrated too often.

Reformed worship should not be overstructured, thus allowing for the freedom of the Spirit to change and redesign worship. It will generally include, in addition to the preaching and hearing of the Word of God, the reading from the Old Testament as well as the New, prayers of praise and thanksgiving, confession of sins and assurance of pardon, intercessory prayer, and the singing of hymns to the glory of God.

Reformed worship will also be characterized by a sense of the numinous. Worship is not a social get-together but a state of being grasped by the holy God. We worship not for the sake of mutual edification but to give glory and honor to God. Yet in addition to the sense of the awesome presence of God, Reformed worship has a certain joyous spontaneity. Where the Spirit

of the Lord is, there is freedom, confidence, and joy. A sanctuary in a truly Reformed church will be based on the principle of the congregation gathered to hear and adore the Word of God.

At least on the American scene, there is no doubt that cultural preaching has largely supplanted biblical preaching and this holds true in conservative as well as liberal churches.

There is much preaching, to be sure, that "sticks to the Gospel" outwardly but makes no attempt to relate the Gospel to the concrete situation where people find themselves. The biblical preacher will not neglect doctrine for religious experience or ethics. He will eschew doctrinal complexities but will try to make clear the doctrinal distinctives of biblical faith. He will not seek to fathom mysteries unknown but declare mysteries revealed.

Biblical preaching will also be kerygmatic rather than apologetic in nature. It will not seek to defend the validity of the claims of the Christian religion but instead herald the good news of reconciliation and redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Kerygmatic preaching is based not on topics of current interest but on the Scriptural message, which has abiding relevance. Consequently, it takes the form of an elucidation of this message rather than a discourse on character or conduct. Kerygmatic preaching is sacramental rather than ethical because through this preaching sins are forgiven and hearts and minds transformed.

Biblical preaching will likewise be evangelical as opposed to moralistic. It will be based on the principle of the sovereignty and all-sufficiency of grace rather than the possibilities for righteousness inherent within man. This means that fidelity to the Word of God is more important than an appeal to the understanding or emotions of our hearers.

Preaching on pericopes or texts selected by the church to fit in with the church year can be a means of quenching the Spirit. Pericopes can be useful as a general guide, but one should be open to the movement of the Spirit even in the selection of the text.

Biblical preaching will be prophetic as well as evangelical and kerygmatic. This is to say it will include the application of the Law to the sins of society. Evangelical power stems from the preaching of the kerygma, but social relevance comes through the preaching of the Law. Those who are called to the ministry of the Word must not be intimidated in the face of public opinion. They must be bold in declaring God's displeasure with social as well as individual sin.

We should note that an awakened and converted congregation will honor the office of preaching. A cultural church will be held together by the impact of the personality of the minister. A biblical church, on the other hand, will be sustained by the power and authority of the Word of God and respect and honor given to the office of preaching. Whereas the spirit of camaraderie will be promoted in a cultural church, the expectation of hope and outgoing love will characterize a biblical church, one that is nurtured and enlivened by the preaching and hearing of the Word of God.

V. THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Donald G. Bloesch

It is commonly believed that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers has its basis in the New Testament rather than the Old and that the Old Testament conception of priesthood is superseded and annulled. However, in the earliest known social pattern of Israel priests as a class did not exist. Any Israelite man could present offerings to God: this was usually the tribal leader or eldest son, for instance, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Manoah, and Gideon.

On the other hand, in the New Testament church one becomes a priest by being united through faith in the one Mediator, Jesus Christ. Because we are his brethren, we share in his priestly role by offering spiritual sacrifices to God. By his Spirit we are enabled to intercede, sacrifice, and counsel on behalf of others.

The New Testament is unequivocal that the sacrifices and burnt offerings of the Old Testament priesthood are both superseded and fulfilled in the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Whereas the sacrifices of the priesthood under the old covenant were offered repeatedly and could never take away sin, Christ offered for all time as single sacrifice for sin that effects salvation.

As the New Testament understands this the priesthood of believers cannot be adequately understood apart from the gifts of the Holy Spirit. All Christians are called to exercise their priesthood but in different ways, depending on the gifts that have been allotted to them.

The charisms of the Spirit do not refer to innate talents or powers but to potentialities that are created, aroused, and appealed to by the Holy Spirit. They are wholly dependent on the empowering and renewing activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the members of the church. Charisms are given to all Christians for the purpose of the upbuilding and extension of the body of Christ. Even the gift of tongues, which is for personal edification, nonetheless contributes to the well-being and upbuilding of the church indirectly.

The gifts of the Spirit are distributed to the whole community of believers, but not everyone receives the very same gift. The Spirit chooses to work through some members of the body of Christ in a different way than through others. Some persons are called to exercise the public ministries of teaching, preaching, and evangelization. Other charisms, such as admonishing, consoling, wisdom, knowledge, and the discerning of spirits are private endowments given by God for the service of others to be used as the occasion demands

All members of the church have their special call and their personal ministry, even though all do not share in the pastoral ministry. A charism for the exercise of a special ministry can be prayed for, but one must be willing to make the sacrifice that the gift requires. All ministers, including those exercised by a special commission (e.g., pastor, teacher) are charismatic. Gifts that are not used will atrophy, and this is what happened when sacerdotalism replaced the priesthood of all believers, and formalism usurped the charismatic fellowship of love that characterized New Testament Christianity at its best. This, of course, accounts for the Montanist reaction in the second and third centuries, when an attempt was made to regain the free exercise of the gifts of the Spirit.

For the purposes of order and propriety the early church was compelled to structure itself, and special offices of pastors and deacons were created. The earliest bishops, however, were equivalent to pastors or presbyters, and their function was basically administrative and pastoral.

The bishops and deacons at Philippi seem to be comparable to the teachers at Corinth and the "presbyter-bishops" of Ephesus. In 1 Peter 2:25 the chief Shepherd alone is given the title of bishop.

The role of bishop became more liturgical in character by the beginning of the third century. The titles "priest" and "high priest" were now applied to the ministry of the bishop, a practice which had earlier been strictly avoided. The first Christian writers to use the words *priest* and *high priest* of the church's ministers were Terullian and Hippolytus.

We believe that this true Church must be governed by the spiritual policy which our Lord has taught us in his Word-namely, that there must be Ministers or Pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the Sacraments: also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, form the council of the Church; that by these means the true religion may be preserved.

The priesthood of believers, in Protestant liberal theology, has been affirmed in such a way as to undercut the idea of a special ministry of the word and sacraments. Theologians who were markedly influenced by the Enlightenment sought to overcome the distinctions between clergy and laity. The pastor was no longer a father figure who speaks God's authoritative word but a fellow-traveler on life's journey who shares the insights and wisdom that he has accumulated on the way.

The ministry of the Word has its basis not only in the priesthood of believers but also in the messianic commissioning of the apostles by Christ. Only some were commissioned by our Lord to preach the Word to the nations. In the light of this brief historical survey it is now appropriate to examine the precise relation between the priesthood of believers, in which all Christians share, and the special ministry of the Word and sacraments. This special ministry is not separate from the priesthood of believers but the pivotal ministry within it.

The pastor is an authority figure and a servant figure at the same time. He has been placed in his role by Christ himself through the inward calling of the Holy Spirit, though the congregation must recognize and ratify what Christ has done. The pastor must not lord it over the congregation but be an example of patience and humility. He must give guidance and direction when necessary. He is a resource person to be sure, but even more he is a spiritual director and confessor. He must not be detached from his people but must identify himself with their trials and sufferings. He must intercede for them daily in prayer. He must preach the word in season and out of season, and this entails exposing false teaching as well as expounding the truth. He must be a model of holiness in keeping with his greater responsibility, though he must speak the truth always in the spirit of love.

To be intercessors and witnesses to the truth at home and at work, such a pastor will inspire those in his care also to be priests. He will welcome reproof from his fellow Christians so long as it is done in charity and is based on Scripture. A church directed by such a pastor will indeed be a holy priesthood where all share in some way in the priestly and kingly and prophetic ministry of Christ. The gifts of the Holy Spirit will be in evidence not only in the pulpit but in Sunday school classes, youth groups, and prayer and Bible study groups. The laity will be the missionary arm of the church, for it is through their outreach in the community that the spiritually lost will hear the good news and will be brought into the worship and life of the church.

We must do justice to both cultic and charismatic dimensions if we are to remain true to our biblical and catholic heritage, in offering a constructive statement of the doctrine of the church and its ministry. In Protestantism there has been a noticeable tendency to downplay the institutional side of the church in favor of charisma and koinonia.

We believe that Luther has preserved the right catholic balance in seeing the pastoral office as derived both from its divine institution by Christ and from the priesthood of believers.

The ministry of the Word and sacraments must not be downgraded, but it must also not be unduly elevated. We see the church as a sacramental and ecclesiastical institution as well as a charismatic fellowship of love. Charisma must be directed and channeled by the pastoral or ecclesiastical office, though we recognize that too often the clerics extinguish rather than fan the flame of the Holy Spirit.

The priesthood of all believers is based on the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ as the sole head and ruler of the church, not on the consensus of the people. Too often the priesthood of all believers has been geared to the interest of religious individualism rather than to the service of the corporate missionary witness of the church. We need to recover the biblical and catholic doctrine of the royal priesthood of the church.

Every Christian is called to the apostolate and not just those who are commissioned to oversee congregations and preach the Word publicly. All Christians are summoned to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of the world and the advancement of the kingdom of God in the world. Every Christian should be an evangelist, in the sense that he is placed under the divine obligation to give testimony to his faith before the world.

VI. TWO KINGDOMS

Donald G. Bloesch

The Bible speaks of two kingdoms in irrevocable conflict with one another—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, also known as the kingdom of Satan. This dualistic vision runs throughout the Scriptures, though the two kingdoms go under many different names. In the Old Testament the two kingdoms antithesis is already evident in Genesis 1, where the light is separated from darkness. Some medieval theologians see this as implying the separation of good and bad angels.

In Israel's theological history, it is difficult to pinpoint the precise time when Leviathan became identified with Satan, the angelic messenger of death who became God's adversary, but this identification is significant in the concept of the two kingdoms, since it indicates a rupture within the order of God's creation itself. It means that the powers of darkness contain within themselves the light of God's good creation, that they have a heavenly origin.

In the intertestamental and New Testament periods, the idea of a kingdom of darkness led by an angelic adversary of God and man is very pronounced. God has set up his kingdom in the midst of a fallen world, but antigod power, angels of violence, have tried to overthrow it by force. In attacking the kingdom of Christ the demonic powers sealed their ultimate destruction. Yet where Christ is not acknowledged as King and Lord, these powers continue to hold sway over the world.

The biblical dualistic perspective was quite pronounced among the patristic fathers, both Greek and Latin. Indeed, they generally interpreted the atonement as the victory of Christ over the demonic powers of darkness. They understood the Christian life as a daily battle against these same powers. Moreover, the temporal power is subject to the spiritual as the body is subject to the soul. Because the divine law goes beyond the natural law, the state can and should receive guidance from the church.

Indeed, not that the reality of the devil was denied in the mystical tradition of the church. Many of the great saints and mystics had graphic encounters with the devil. Yet those who tended toward pure mysticism viewed evil as only a fleeting shadow that does not really disturb reality in itself. The absolute opposition between good and evil power is overcome, since all distinctions are lost in God, all opposites are transcended.

The reality of two kingdoms in dire conflict was nowhere given more cogent expression than in the theology of Martin Luther. He sees a qualitative distinction between the two kingdoms. God's kingdom is one of grace and mercy, whereas the kingdom of the world is one of wrath and severity. Christ's kingdom is invisible and spiritual, and its weapons are spiritual: the preaching of the Gospel, prayer, and works of love. The devil's kingdom, on the other hand, is temporal and is ruled by strict laws enforced by the sword. Those who still believe in Jesus Christ and are reborn by his Spirit belong to the kingdom of God. Those who still dwell in unbelief belong to the devil's kingdom, which is "a disordered chaos of darkness."

The connection between the two governments can be seen in the individual Christian as he lives out his vocation. He is a citizen of two realms, the temporal (state) and the spiritual (kingdom of God), and, therefore, he has different responsibilities and tasks. Yet the two realms are not separated but are held together in paradoxical tension. The secular tasks of the Christian

must always be informed by a spiritual goal. The Christian is summoned to carry the Gospel into the structures of life.

In the nineteenth century, with the rise of premillennialism and dispensationalism, evangelicals came to take a much more pessimistic view of human history. It was held that the church is now entering its twilight period, and Christ's kingdom, which signifies a restoration of the historic Davidic kingdom, will be inaugurated at his second coming. The kingdom of the world, which is under the domain of Satan, was believed to be present, while the kingdom of Christ, the millennial age, was depicted as future. The church, comprised of the remnant of true believers called out of the world, will be taken up by Christ into heaven before the great tribulation receding the second coming. Yet the dispensationalists also contend that Christians will share in the rule of the kingdom.

With the rise of the Enlightenment in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a monistic orientation supplanted that of biblical dualism, and the whole world was viewed as the family of God. The devil was demythologized to become the adverse consciousness rooted in ignorance and disregard of the divine law.

In the modern view the fundamental cleavage is not between God and the devil, heaven and hell, holiness and sin, but between nature and freedom or flesh and spirit.

We must accept the fact that the powers defeated by Christ are still at work, that they refuse to admit their defeat and are struggling more violently than ever. They do gain local victories, and their violence forces us to believe in their power still real over us, whereas in truth they are subject to Christ.

The kingdom of darkness, the devil's kingdom, is not equal with God's kingdom, but its goal is to injure God as well as to subjugate man. As we see it, the fundamental dichotomy is not between nature and grace, time and eternity, spirit and matter, but between sin and holiness, light

and darkness, God and the devil. We see the two governments of church and state as two modes of the divine rule. While the state is instituted for the purpose of preservation, the church is established by Christ for the purpose of redemption.

The kingdom of God is both a future reality beyond history and present now in the community of faith. It exists now in the midst of the faithful, though it is not to be equated with any visible institution. The church is the vessel or the instrument of the kingdom rather than the kingdom itself. The kingdom is basically future, but it is present now in the hearts of those who believe. It is mirrored and anticipated in the company of believers, but it will not be fulfilled until the end of the world.

Until Christ comes again in glory, the church is engaged in an unceasing struggle with the dislodged powers of darkness. These powers can be vanquished only by the Word of God, not by the sword, though the chaos that they engender in society can be held in check by the sword,

Both church and state, ideally, should be allied in the struggle against evil, and this ideal can be approximated where the state is infused with Christian values. While the sword of the state is physical force, the sword of the church is the Word of God. The state should seek not simply to preserve law and order, but also to serve the cause of Justice. Its goal should be not so much a holy community as a just society. The rational ideal of justice must be united with the suprarational ideal of perfect love if creative justice is to become a reality.

We, as the ambassadors of Christ, cannot build his kingdom, but we can serve it. We cannot bring in the kingdom, but we can prepare the way for it. The kingdom of Christ is presently hidden in the structures of history, but its revelation and consummation are still ahead of us in the absolute future of God. We can be instruments in its advance within present history, but we cannot determine this advance, since the wind of the Spirit blows where it wills (John 3:8). We cannot force the hand of God, but we can pray that his kingdom will come on earth as

well as in heaven (Matt. 6:10). Moreover, our prayers as well as our spoken and lived witness are indeed used by the Spirit in extending and furthering the kingdom in this world.

VII. THE CHURCH'S SPIRITUAL MISSION

Donald G. Bloesch

It must be carefully defined why the concept of the spiritual mission of the church has lent itself in the past to grave distortions. We propose to show that the biblical understanding of the church's spiritual mission entails preaching the Law in its social dimension as well as the Gospel. At the same time, we must avoid the opposite error of politicalizing the Gospel, by which we lose sight of the spiritual mission of the church altogether.

The New Testament gave a spiritual interpretation of salvation which did not deny its social implications but pointed beyond history to an eternal kingdom, while the Old Testament tended to conceive of the kingdom of God as a restored earth and the deliverance which God effects as political-social.

The vision of the New Testament was the spiritual in the secular, not divorced from the secular. It should be recognized that in the mind of the New Testament was a spiritual mission to be lived out in the midst of this world and not in some other world. Moreover, the kingdom of God was viewed not as an individualistic, private affair but as a new society in which the brethren in the faith would share their goods with one another and open their homes as hospitality houses.

In the battle with Gnosticism the early church had to emphasize the goodness of creation and the Christian's responsibility in society. It also had to make clear that the spirituality of the kingdom does not entail escape from the body but instead the resurrection of the body.

The Christian community had an obligation not only to bring people to Christ and build them up in the faith but also to infuse the secular order with Christian values so that the heads of state might give indirect support to the church in its heavenly mission.

The primary content of the church's preaching should be the Gospel of reconciliation and redemption which involves the announcement of judgment as well as grace manifested in Jesus Christ.

The church's task, in recent years, has been reinterpreted to mean something other than the great commission given by Jesus to his apostles. Some have sought to politicize the Gospel so that it now is seen as a message of political liberation.

There is no doubt that salvation and mental health are integrally related and that the gift of salvation will bring identity and meaning into a person's life and thereby impart a certain degree of stability. At the same time, the call to obedience which comes from the cross entails the disciplining of one's passions and feelings and a willingness to stand against the predominating values of the surrounding culture.

The two dangers that confront the church today are divorcing the kingdom of God from politics and economics and maintaining that the kingdom is realized through politics and economics. While a privatistic evangelicalism and an acculturated liberalism where the Gospel is psychologized are guilty of the first error, the liberation theologies often fall into the second error.

Embracing the Gospel means being willing to give a public testimony to the freedom of Christ and the law of grace in the face of the political religions of nations, races, and classes. It entails not only taking up the cross in service to the unfortunate in society but also engaging in political programs for social change.

In this context includes social action, social service should also be regarded as a fruit and evidence of the Gospel. It should follow the Gospel proclamation as a demonstration of our gratefulness for the redemption purchased for us by Christ. Social service sometimes takes chronological priority over the preaching of the Gospel since, if our hearers are in dire physical distress or material need, they will not listen to our message until these immediate concerns are dealt with.

The way to regain social relevance in our preaching is to rediscover the social imperatives of the law of God, which certainly form a part of God's Word. We need to address ourselves to social as well as personal evils in society when we preach against sin. We must not only herald the good news of God's grace but also warn of God's impending judgment on a disobedient people. It is not up to the church to implement the law-this is the task of the state-but the church must preach the law as well as offer guidelines to government officials through its public pronouncements. Political decisions should always be informed or shaped by theology, and this goal can be realized not only by Christian officials in government reflecting on their faith but also by formal counsel given by the church to the government.

The Gospel itself is a stick of dynamite in the social structure, and this is why both communist and fascist dictatorships almost invariably place a restriction on its heralds and ambassadors. The Gospel has politically revolutionary implications because it decasualizes the holy places of culture-religion; it demythologizes the myths which society has created for itself and by which it is enabled to survive; and it calls into radical questions the current absolutes that enthrall the political and academic establishments and that have their source in man's idolatrous imagination.

However, our chief motivation for spreading the Gospel is not to overturn oppressive social structures or disturb the existing social order but instead to witness to God's incomparable grace in Jesus Christ and thereby save souls from sin, death, and hell.

In the mainline denominations evangelism understood as winning people to Christ and thereby saving them from eternal death would definitely be considered a secondary task of the church, and in many circles it would be dissociated completely from the church's mission. It is indeed imperative that we recover the evangelistic zeal and urgency of the first-century church and carry the flag of the Gospel into the pagan world of our time, seeking to bring all peoples into submission to the one Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

VIII. THE PERSONAL RETURN OF CHRIST

Donald G. Bloesch

The foremost issue in current eschatology is the nature of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of the future will be realized in two stages: an interim millennial kingdom subsequent to the second advent and the final consummation, which "will introduce a redeemed order whose actual character transcends both historical experience and realistic imagination."

From the evangelical side there have been attempts to do justice to the dimensions of the Christian hope that concern man's historical future without confusing this with the eschatological hope. The issue of life after death has been a perennial one in theology and continues to occupy the attention of theologians of all stripes. There are some who deny the reality or even the relevance of this subject in Christian eschatology.

In realized eschatology the second coming Christ is dissolved to mean simply the return of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost. This event is often interpreted by liberal theologians in a figurative way as regarding to the gradual permeation of society by the ethical principles of Christ.

While Christ came in his first manifestation as the suffering servant, he shall come again the second time as the conquering king and judge. Hebrews assures us that "Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb. 9:28. 1 John 3:2).

The parousia of Christ is portrayed as unexpected, like the coming of a thief in the night. It will take people by surprise, and therefore every believer must maintain constant vigilance. Moreover, it is made clear that the coming of Christ will be visible. Jesus himself maintained that all the tribes of the earth would see the Son of man coming in his glory.

The purpose of the second coming of Christ is to introduce the future age by inaugurating and completing two mighty events: the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment. Both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected to appear before the judgment throne of Christ.

There was only a faint intimation of life after death in the early history of Israel. Sheol was the realm of the departed, and at first it was believed that there was no conscious existence in this stage. Gradually Sheol came to be filled with more content, and a kind of conscious immortality was affirmed, though this was based on an inescapable relationship with God rather than inherent potentialities within the soul. It was in connection with the messianic hope of the nation that the idea of the resurrection of the body arose (Isa. 26:14-19; Dan 12:2; Ezek. 37).

In the New Testament the resurrection of God's people gains its meaning and purpose from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Paul declares in 1 Cor. 15:17-18, "If Christ has not been raised...then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." In Heb. 4, the term sleep is therefore theological and eschatological, not anthropological. What Paul means by falling asleep in Christ corresponds to what Hebrews means by entering God's rest.

The last day is not to be confused with the moment of death. Some believe that the parousia will be essentially an apocalypse, that is, a revelation in bodily or earthly form of what we already are in Christ. We concur that the final resurrection will be a public revelation, yet not only this but also a transfiguration, a putting on of the incorruptible body that shall endure throughout eternity.

Because the millennial hope has been a source of inspiration to Christians throughout the history of the church, impelling many toward a missionary vocation, it merits serious consideration. The polemical overtones of this doctrine make it especially significant for those who are concerned with the catholicity and unity of the church.

Three general positions have developed concerning the millennium in the history of the church. The first, which is called premillennialism, understands the millennium as a messianic, interim kingdom inaugurated by the second coming of Christ, in which he will reign on earth for 1,000 years (or an indefinite period) before the last judgment and end of the world. And then a second, in which he sets up the millennial kingdom on earth after destroying the beast and false prophet (see Rev. 19). Extreme dispensationalists speak of two gospels, the gospel of grace and the gospel of the kingdom. The first is for the Gentiles and the second for the Jews. The kingdom gospel will be in effect during the time of the millennium.

The third position, postmillennialism, envisions a millennial period within history prior to the parousia but not identical with the whole history of the church. In this conception there will be a golden age for the church in which the Gospel will be preached to all nations, and then the end will come (cf. Matt. 24:14).

Postmillennialism has more Scriptural support than is commonly realized. First, wherever the binding of Satan is referred to in the New Testament, it can be seen to be related to the work of Christian mission, and this is a salient postmillennial emphasis (cf. Luke 10:17, 18; John 12:20-23).

The millennium is best understood not as a condition already actualized in all its power and efficacy but as a drama that is being unfolded on the screen of history as the church penetrates the darkness of the world. At his second coming Christ not only brings an end to the dark and tragic history of a sinful world but also consummates and perfects the millennial glory

of an advancing church. The second advent of our Lord predates the millennium as fulfilled in the eschatological triumph of the new world aeon of God.

Therefore, the millennium can be seen to have four sides: the out pouring of the Spirit upon the church at Pentecost and continuing in all periods of missionary expansion; the paradise of the blessed, where the church triumphant intercedes for the church militant; the great harvest of souls as history moves toward a grand climax; and the final triumph over the adversaries of God and man on the great day of the Lord, inaugurated by his second coming.

We have tried to stay clear of a false church triumphalism that exempts the church from the judgment of God and from the cross of persecution. We have sought to avoid both a crippling pessimism that sees the church as only a tiny remnant besieged by the hordes of darkness and a too facile optimism that underestimates the continuing power of sin and death in the world. The messianic kingdom of Christ is already realized in the birth and life of the church, but it has yet to be consummated when the church is taken up into the eternal kingdom of God. The new age is present now, though hidden in the community of faith, but it will be manifest throughout all the earth when our Lord comes again in glory.

IX. HEAVEN AND HELL
Donald G. Bloesch

It is the belief in a supernatural heaven and hell if anything has disappeared from modern thought. Even those who retain some vague idea of heavenly bliss beyond the pale of death are extremely reluctant to give serious credence to the threat of a final judgment and eternal condemnation. On the other hand eternal life understood as the depth dimension of resent existence is readily accepted.

The New Testament stoutly affirms the supernatural realities of heaven and hell in addition to hades or the realm of the dead. These realities are not merely states of mind but time-space dimensions beyond our space and time. Eternity is not simply to be equated with futurity; it signifies the absolute future beyond the merely temporal or historical future.

The warning and the promise are two sides of the good news. The warning is addressed particularly to the "good" people, to the "religious" people, since these are the ones who claim access to the treasure of the Law and Gospel and who claim to keep the Law. They think that they see, and this is why they shall be made blind (John 9:40,41). The promise is addressed to sinners (Mark 2:17), that is, those who know and confess their sin and who therefore seek a Savior. They acknowledge that now they do not see as they ought, and this is why they will see in the end (John 9:39).

From the first century onward a conflict has raged between those who defend a universal restoration of all people to the favor of God and those who affirm the harsh reality of divine judgment and hell.

For the most part, among the cults and sects the idea of an eternal hell understood as endless torment has been completely discarded. Sectarian movements that teach conditional immortality, that is, immortality dependent on faith in Christ, are the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and Christadelphians. In this position those who reject Christ will be resurrected on the last day, and then they will experience anguish terminating in the second death (annihilation). The Mormons teach purification and growth in world beyond this world.

The idea of purification after death has a long history in the tradition of the Western church. The doctrine of purgatory arose in connection with the ideas of satisfaction and merit; it was said that the reward of heaven cannot be attained until one has paid his debts in full.

None has wrestled with the problem of man's ultimate destiny in the light of Jesus Christ more indefatigably than Karl Barth, of all theologians in our time . He once remarked that theology in its essence is eschatology, and this own monumental work seems to indicate this, though he sees the eschaton not only at the end but also at the center of history, where God became man in Jesus Christ.

According to Barth despite the fact that all people are children of God in the light of Christ, not all realize their destiny as children of God, at least in human history. While the universalist motif is very pronounced in Barth, we must not overlook the motif of particularism as well, however subdued.

Since reprobation serves election, for Barth no limitation can be placed on God's illimitable grace, and this means that even the rejected are only provisionally rejected. In view of the fact that Barth did not complete the fifth volume of his *Church Dogmatics*, which was to deal

with the doctrine of redemption or consummation, we shall never know exactly where his thoughts would have finally taken him, He seeks to affirm both the universality of love and grace and the self-destructive character of love to those who reject it. He has helped theology to break through an impasse on this important theme, but in so doing he has not been able to uphold the eternity of hell. The logic of his theology drives him toward an ultimate universalism, though his intention is to transcend the polarity between universalism and particularism.

While we must distinguish between God's justice and love, we should not separate them, as was the tendency in the older theology, since this creates a bifurcation within the very heart of God. The two heresies to be avoided are universalism and double predestination. We must not say that God loves the elect only, since this separates his love from his justice. The other danger is to contend that God must love in the same way. We should remember that God's love is a holy love. Love is not acquiescence in the face of sin but a searing judgment upon sin.

Hell is not outside the compass of God's mercy nor the sphere of his kingdom, and in this sense we call it the last refuge for the sinner. Hell as well as heaven is the outcome of the atonement. All our sins send us to hell, but only reception of the grace of God keeps us in hell. We are all predestined to be witnesses and signs of the grace of God, but some will bear witness to this grace in their destruction and thereby be signs of contradiction. Hell is wrongly understood if it is seen primarily as man's self-creation: it is essentially the creation of a loving God for those who refuse the help offered to them in Christ.

Whereas hell means a state of continual estrangement from God after the last judgment, heaven signifies a state of intensified fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and with the whole company of the saints.

The same can be said for heaven just as hell is created by both the love and justice of God. We are assured of heaven not only because of the mercy of God revealed in Christ but also

because of the satisfaction of Christ paid to God. Heaven is a free gift, but also a prize procured by the merits of Christ, who perfectly fulfilled the law of God in our stead. We are given a title to heaven (by justification) as well as fitness for heaven (by sanctification). Heaven is the outcome of a legal verdict as well as a testimony to the infinite grace of God that goes beyond the law.

The only sin that is unforgivable is the sin against the Holy Spirit, rejecting and refusing the offer of divine grace (cf. Matt. 12:31, 32; Mark 3:28, 29; Heb. 12:25). The only cure is the cross of Christ appropriated in faith. We should not seek to know more than is revealed, but we do know this: that outside of Christ and faith in his atonement there is no salvation either in this life or in the life to come. We do not need a special message from the deal to prepare now for the judgment that awaits us; we have Moses and prophets as well as the Gospel of the New Testament, and that is deemed sufficient in the eyes of God. Let us make ready to meet our Lord and Savior as he confronts us here and now, for tomorrow may be too late!

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X. HOW DISTINCTIVE IS
EVANGELISCALISM?

Donald G. Bloesch

We shall recapitulate some themes already discussed but in such a way as to highlight the differences between evangelical and non-evangelical religion, in assessing what is distinctive in evangelical Christianity. Our intention has been to build bridges between the various strands within the evangelical spectrum, but as evangelicalism looks outward to secularism and the non-Christian religions, it can only remain within its definite boundaries fixed by an authoritative divine revelation in history.

One danger today is that the word evangelical is given too broad a connotation, with the result that the distinctive tenets that it has defended in the past are obscured or compromised. Though evangelicalism crosses all denominational lines, it definitely excludes all religion based on law and not on Gospel.

It is appropriate at this point to consider that is the hallmark of evangelical faith. We affirm that the watershed of evangelicalism is not the inerrancy of Scripture, not even its divine authority, nor is it the person of Christ or the Trinity. Instead it is the cross of Christ, the doctrine of salvation through the righteousness of Christ procured for us by his sacrificial life, death, and resurrection. It is the cross that gives authority to Scripture, and it is the cross that reveals and confirms the Messianic identity of Jesus the Son of God.

Certainly in the area of theological authority evangelical Christianity differs markedly from other philosophies and religions. Its supreme authority is the Word of God revealed and

embodied in Jesus Christ and attested and recorded in sacred Scripture. This Word is not simply a past event but a living reality that meets us as we encounter Scripture and the kerygmatic proclamation of the church. It cannot be reduced to words, but it is communicated primarily through words. The Word of God is the Gospel of God, not as a historic testimony buried in the past but as a creative living word, an eternal word that speaks to us in the here and now.

Evangelical theology places the Word of God above church tradition as well as all continuing or supposedly additional revelation. Here it finds itself in conflict not only with the cults (such as Mormonism, Swedenborgianism, and the World Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, which appeal to new revelations) but also with the Catholic branches of the church that are inclined to elevated tradition to the same level as Scripture

The Word of God takes various forms as it enters human history: the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the prophetic and apostolic witness to Jesus Christ, and the church's proclamation of Jesus Christ. In view of the fact that Christ is the determinative content of the Scriptural witness, this witness is also the Word of God, and since it is an eye-and ear-witness account of the events of redemption, it is the criterion for measuring revelation in the history of the church.

. Biblical religion is distinguished from all forms of culture-religion in its affirmation of the utter transcendence of God. God is utterly transcendent because he is the creator of the world and man. But he also transcends man morally because man is a sinner, whereas God is absolute holiness. God is indeed "wholly other" in a moral as well as in an ontological sense. Yet he does not remain wholly other but identifies himself with man's guilt and misery in the person of Jesus Christ. God condescends to man in the incarnation of his Son, and this is why biblical religion is not simply theocentric (as in Islam) but the anthropocentric, since its focus is on the God-Man who gave his life on the cross for sinners.

The true God is both transcendent and immanent, but he is basically transcendent, whereas his immanence is a gift of grace to a fallen humanity. Though essentially beyond suffering, he enters into our travail and affliction out of gratuitous love. What makes evangelical Christianity distinctive is that it sees the living, omnipotent God as the Savior of the world. And this salvation is understood not only in terms of the incarnation but also and preeminently in terms of the atoning sacrifice on Golgotha. Evangelicalism upholds not simply the God who acts in history but the God who reconciles and redeems, and this means that even in the doctrine of God the cross is still central.

Another doctrine that sets evangelicalism apart from other perspectives on life and the world is the radical sinfulness of man. While acknowledging that man is created in the image of God and that this image is reflected in man's fallen state, it contends that sin distorts and impairs man's reasoning powers as well as utterly perverts his volitional capacity. The human heart is not operatively good or morally neutral but desperately wicked (Jer. 17:0; Eph. 4:18; Rom 7:28).

Evangelical religion looks beyond man the sinner to Christ the Redeemer, and this is why evangelicalism is essentially a religion of hope. It sees man not just in terms of his present predicament but in light of Jesus Christ, the ideal man. For this reason it can rejoice in humanity and not seek to escape from humanity as in Gnosticism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ concerns more than his person: it also has reference to his incomparable work on the cross. Christ is unique not only because he was divine but also because, as divinity, he entered into the human condition, taking upon himself the sin and guilt of the world. He was more than a prophet or holy man: he was a sin-bearer and mediator between God and man. He was not only model or exemplar but Savior of a fallen humanity.

There are some people who acknowledge that Christ made an atonement for sin, but who, nonetheless, argue that we can make reparation for sin by following in his steps. What they need

to understand is that Jesus did not simply demonstrate a universal law, nor did he merely bring us a new power; instead he suffered, died, and rose again in our place. His sacrifice is inimitable, though we can testify to this unique sacrifice by lives of outgoing service and self-giving love. We cannot atone for sin, but we can witness to his atonement and thereby be instrumental in the salvation of our fellow human beings.

At the heart of evangelical religion is the doctrine of salvation, salvation by grace alone. This indeed is also the essence of the Gospel, since grace is procured for the human race only by the costly sacrifice of Christ, who satisfied and fulfilled the demands of the law by his sinless life and agonizing death. And this work takes place outside ourselves in the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, though it is applied to our heart by the Holy Spirit.

We can say that salvation takes place in two stages: the doing and dying of Jesus and the sending forth of the Spirit. The latter is more than just the application of the salvation of Christ: it is salvific activity too. Yet the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit is not the basis of the justifying work of God in Christ, but is the result and evidence of our justification and election. At the same time we would not be effectively justified unless we were engrafted into the righteousness of Christ by the Holy Spirit in faith. Faith is an instrumental cause of our justification, but not its meritorious condition. It is the means by which justification is made concrete and effective in our lives.

Salvation is correlative with faith, but faith is not equal to salvation. Salvation has to do first and foremost with what Christ accomplished for us in his sacrificial life and death. Salvation is the remission of sins procured for us through the atoning death and resurrection of our Lord. Everything regarding our salvation has been done on our behalf in Jesus Christ. Yet we must appropriate and receive this if we are to benefit from it. It has been done for us but not yet in us. Faith is necessary to lay hold of the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Though it does not dispense with the latter as does radical mysticism or spiritualism, evangelical religion emphasizes the inward over the outward. It is a religion of Gospel, not Law, though it still makes a place for the Law as a guideline for the Christian life. It believes that personal transformation takes priority over social reformation, though it strongly supports efforts toward a more just or equitable society.

Evangelicalism sees the root of man's misery in inward sin, not in external transgressions of known laws. Sin is a contagion that infects every part of man's being; though in itself it is invisible, it has visible fruits and symptoms. No ascetic discipline or human technique can enable one to overcome the sin within. The answer to sin lies in a new birth, not in a new code of behavior.

The new birth itself signifies an inward change, brought about by the invisible work of the Holy Spirit. Evangelical faith resists all attempts to equate the new birth with any external rite such as baptism, though it regards baptism as the sign of the new birth and, when related to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, a sign with efficacy.

Faith itself is something inward, invisible, and must not be reduced to a particular experience or confused with the outward belief in certain historical facts or truths. Rationalistic orthodoxy has often obscured this inward character of faith by emphasizing assent to right doctrine over an interior or personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Even though its object is a divine revelation given in history, not only the Christian life but theology too must be grounded in the inwardness of faith. Yet this revelation can only be grasped by the inwardness of faith, and apart from this subjective dimension the objective data have little meaning or value.

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XI. TOWARD THE RECOVERY OF BIBLICAL FAITH

Donald G. Bloesch

Over the past several decades, one of the continuing banes of modern evangelicalism is a biblical literalism and obscurantism which effectively nullify the solid gain in biblical-historical research. For example, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are integrally related to objective history, but most scholars agree that the literary genre of this material reveals that large sections of it are mythopoetic.

We must be alert to the worldliness within evangelicalism, especially when it comes in the guise of religiosity. Notwithstanding what allurements of the positive thinking cult, we should not seek to use the Gospel to gain the goods of life or to find self-fulfillment. We must be cognizant of the incontrovertible chasm between the values of the world and the transcendent Word of God.

In our time, experientialism is another temptation to which evangelicals seem particularly vulnerable. The search for extraordinary signs of the gift of the Spirit is one obvious example, but in the less charismatic churches there is also a yearning for transforming experiences, and the objective work of Christ on the cross recedes into the background. One reason why modern evangelicalism has produced so little systematic theology is that experience is valued more highly than theology, and soul-winning is regarded more laudable than intellectual endeavor. Theology must not be rejected in favor of either practical piety or devout mysticism.

Our position is that revelation is not at the disposal of reason and is never a logical conclusion of human thought. The outsider can arrive at a limited understanding of the biblical proposition by examining its literary and historical context. But he invariably misunderstands the divine intent of this proposition.

Biblical faith cannot be recovered until we recognize anew the divine authority and inspiration of the Bible. This authority has been eroded both by higher critics who read into Scripture a naturalistic philosophy and by its uncritical devotees, who absolutize the outmoded world view reflected in the Bible and thereby render the biblical witness incredible.

However, as we seek to reaffirm biblical authority there is a need to reinterpret this authority, particularly in light of the present-day impasse in evangelicalism on this question. Rightly understood, infallibility and inerrancy can indeed be posited of the Bible, but wrongly understood, these ideas can create division and confusion. Unfortunately, a great number of inerrancy advocates today want a rationally guaranteed authority, but this makes reason, not revelation, the final criterion.

We go astray if we base the authority of Scripture on the inerrancy of the writing and then try to demonstrate this according to the canons of scientific rationality. The authority of the Bible is based on the One whom it attests and the One who speaks through it every age with the word of regenerating power.

When we say that the Bible is the Word of God we mean two things: that all the words are selected by the Spirit of God through his guidance of the human authors; and that the truth of God is enshrined in and mediated through these words. The Bible is the Word of God in all that it teaches, though this teaching is not immediately self-evident but must be unveiled by the Spirit.

What is infallible and inerrant is the Word within the words, the divine meaning given in and through the human testimony. Our ultimate norm is not simply what the human author

intends but what God intends through the witness of the author, though there is always a certain congruity between the latter and the former.

We need to be aware of heresies on the right, in calling for a rediscovery of evangelical distinctives: perfectionism, dispensationalism, religious enthusiasm, and hyperfundamentalism.

Since this entire work is devoted to their explication, this is not the place to enumerate the evangelical distinctives, but we would like to give special attention to the doctrine of salvation by grace, for it is the heart and soul of evangelicalism. This tenet lies at the basis of the meaning of the cross as well as of the new birth.

We would do well to qualify and reformulate traditional slogans in the light of Scripture and with an ecumenical sensitivity, as we strive to recover evangelical distinctives, . The sovereignty of God must not be construed as the unlimited power of an arbitrary God but as the sovereignty of grace, of the God who acts in love.

Though it will often entail this, the call to recover evangelical distinctives is not necessarily an invitation to doctrinal conflict, since wherever theology is taken seriously, controversy abounds. Yet doctrinal conflicts may also be a sign of acculturation. In view of the drift of the mainline churches into unitarianism and universalism, the need to reaffirm evangelical distinctives will indubitably create tensions and perhaps division in the church. But a true church can only exist on the basis of doctrine and biblical truth, and where this truth is diluted or ignored we have a false church.

We need to regain catholic substance in addition to upholding evangelical distinctives, which means continuity with the tradition of the whole church, including its sacramental side. It is incumbent on us to recover the doctrine of the church, particularly with regard to its indispensable role in the communication of salvation. The church is not a mediator between God and man, but it is a veritable means of grace to man.

The four marks of the true church in catholic tradition are holiness, apostolicity, catholicity, and oneness (or unity). The Reformers added the two practical signs of the scriptural preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments. These signs were intended not to preempt the traditional marks but instead to complement them. Only an apostolic and catholic church will preach the pure Gospel and faithfully administer the sacraments.

Just as Jesus Christ and Holy Scripture have two sides, the divine and the human, so the sacraments have two sides. Conservative evangelical Christianity has lost sight of the divine side in the sacraments, while certain strands in Roman Catholicism underplay, if not virtually deny, the human side. We affirm that Christ is really present in the reception of the elements of bread and wine, not as localized in them but as reaching out through them. Christ meets us in, through, and with these elements so that his words "This is my body" are not merely symbolic.

Certainly we need also to recover the salutary role of tradition in the interpretation and understanding of Scripture. Scripture interprets itself, to be sure, but tradition can aid us in discerning how Scripture interprets itself. Whereas the message of Holy Scripture is the ultimate authority for faith, church tradition can be regarded as a proximate or penultimate authority. Moreover, since the Bible is transmitted only through the church tradition, the church plays a crucial, though instrumental, role in bringing people the Word of God.

We as evangelicals need to reappropriate the mystical side of faith. An evangelicalism that denies this element becomes incurable rationalistic, and this is what we find in much of Protestantism today. We need to appreciate the Catholic emphasis on works and Christian life which are a complement to the evangelical stress on grace and faith. While we must always vigorously affirm the sovereignty of grace, we should at the same time make a place for human responsibility and accountability if we are to do justice to the total biblical witness.

Catholic traditionalism and eclecticism are not to be confused with catholic tradition and breadth of vision. We must repudiate what detracts from the evangelical doctrines of the primacy and infallibility of Scripture, the substitutionary atonement, and salvation by grace, but we must not be too hasty in discarding elements within the ancient tradition that may be salutary and helpful in spiritual life and growth, even though they may not be directly rooted in the Scripture.

We need to regain continuity with the historical roots of the faith as well as renew our fidelity to the biblical and evangelical witness, in constructing a fresh theology for our day. This means an opening to Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy as well as a new appreciation of the Reformation and the post-Reformation movements of spiritual purification, Pietism and Puritanism.

There are signs of promise in the Catholic charismatic renewal insofar as it is promoting a recovery of a biblical spirituality that stands at variance with the new-Platonic mysticism that is so all-pervasive in Catholicism.

In addition to the emphasis on biblical spirituality, a catholic evangelicalism will affirm the social imperatives of the faith: it will bring the faith to bear upon the whole man, upon his political and economic condition as well as his spiritual state. It will emphasize the obligation of the Christian to engage in humanitarian service and social reform as well as evangelism.

Catholic evangelicals will be preeminently concerned with church unity, since this was the express will and prayer of our Lord, and only a united church can make a lasting impact on a disunited and confused world. The only genuine spiritual way to true evangelical-catholic unity is a return to the message and teachings of Scripture with the aid of the tradition of the whole church. Yet this return will involve not only an acceptance of right doctrine but also a renewal of personal faith.

In confronting this crisis we need to create an evangelical-catholic synthesis that will bring together the forces of biblical faith and renewal in all Christian traditions. The cleavage is no longer between denominations but cuts across denominational lines. On the one hand is biblical supernaturalism, the faith of the holy catholic church; on the other is secularistic humanism that frequently appears in the guise of liberal religion and occasionally even of "the old time religion." and apologetics that is also a kerygmatic dogmatics is necessary to defend the faith against present-day errors and misunderstandings.
