

EVANGELICALS, CATHOLICS, AND ORTHODOX TOGETHER: IS THE CHURCH THE EXTENSION OF THE INCARNATION?

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The nature of Christ's relationship to the Church and the Church's role in salvation have been points of dispute among the Christian traditions since the days of the Protestant Reformation.¹ Recent gatherings of evangelicals, Catholics, and Orthodox for dialogue indicate that questions of ecclesiology will continue to command attention for dialogue to proceed fruitfully. Of particular interest in the current context are indications of an openness from some evangelicals to the usual Catholic and Orthodox charge of being weak in ecclesiology. One evangelical, for example, reflecting on his own encounter with Orthodoxy states, ". . . it is understandable that evangelicals feel that the Orthodox doctrine of the church is too 'high.' But perhaps our theology of the church is too 'low,' much lower than our Protestant forebears would have it."²

At the heart of the issue for "high" and "low" ecclesiologies is the interpretation of the apostle Paul's words to the Corinthian believers in 1 Cor 12:27, ". . . you are Christ's body." Typically Protestants take the body image to be a metaphor not unlike the other images the NT uses to discuss the nature and function of the Church. As Paul's favorite metaphor for the Church, the body image particularly illuminates the grand Pauline theme of Christ's *union or communion* with his Church.³ Catholics and Orthodox, by contrast, see 1 Cor 12:27 as more than mere metaphor and particularly as a simple statement of reality proving that the relationship of the Church and Christ

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¹ The Protestant Reformation was just as much a struggle of ecclesiology as it was of soteriology. The soteriological assertions of *sola gratia*, *sola fidei*, *sola scriptura* were at once also (negative) pronouncements about the Church's nature and role in salvation.

Despite considerable progress toward convergence on many divisive issues, participants in twentieth-century ecumenism repeatedly are returning to the ecclesiological question as the issue holding back unity (Robert W. Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* [Minneapolis: Augsburg–Fortress, 1992] 4, 90–94). J. M. R. Tillard, a Roman Catholic veteran of many ecumenical discussions, formulates the root issue in the question, "Does the work of grace (justification) come from God alone, or is it from God and from the church?" (Tillard, "Vers une nouvelle problematique de la 'Justification'?" *Irenikon* 55 [1982] 1856–1887; cited by Jenson, *Unbaptized God* 4, n. 9, translation mine).

² Daniel B. Clendenin, "Why I'm Not Orthodox," *Christianity Today* (Jan. 6, 1997) 38. Clendenin continues the thought by citing the opening pages of Book IV of Calvin's *Institutes* where Calvin refers twice to the famous words of Cyprian, "you cannot have God as your Father without the Church as your Mother" (IV, 1.1, 4).

³ Influential works with this view are: Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960); Ernst Best, *One Body in Christ: A Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (London: SPCK, 1955); Markus Barth, "A Chapter on the Church—The Body of Christ," *Int* 12 (1958) 131–156; C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 70; Geddes MacGregor,

of the church as Christ's body better handles the issue of backgrounds for the image.⁷³ It also avoids the difficulties the realistic interpretation encounters in terms of Christ's present exalted status.⁷⁴

4. *The function of the image.* Paul's epistles are occasional in nature, and it is in the context of solving a particular local church's problems of unity that the body image must be understood.⁷⁵ In Romans and 1 Corinthians, the body of Christ only appears in parenetic discourses to illustrate the interior relations of the Church—the unity, mutuality, and diversity of believers to one another. In Ephesians and Colossians, the relationship of believers to Christ is added. In any case, the significance of the body image is primarily in its inward focus, contrary to incarnational ecclesiology, where the *totus Christus* mediates salvation to the world.⁷⁶

The third implication for our work is that the meaning of Christ's relationship to his Church must be sought elsewhere than the theology of Chalcedon. As we have seen, the incarnational paradigm does not leave sufficiently separate the two subjects of Christ and his body the way the NT seems to demand. A better paradigm, one that can retain the essential features of mysterious union and yet provide sufficient distinction of subjects in the Church, is the one suggested in the *perichoretic* relationships of the divine Trinity. It is also the one that Paul expressly teaches as expressing the relationship of Christ and his Church by the analogy of marriage in Eph 5:30–32.

In trinitarian theology, *perichoresis* describes the mutual interpenetration of the divine persons, the condition of the Godhead where “in every divine person as subject the other persons also indwell.”⁷⁷ *Perichoresis* is the term applied to understand Jesus' repeated references to being “in” the Father and the Father being “in” him (John 10:38; cf. 14:10–11; 17:21). It is also the way he speaks of the relationship believers will have as they commune with him and the Father (John 17:21, 23). Christians are in them; they are in us. Paul

⁷³ There are as many suggestions for background to the body image as there are sub-groups in Paul's environment. I agree with Perriman who states that “those studies which attempt to locate the origin of the body motif within Paul's own thought (as arising, for example, out of Eucharistic language or the ‘in Christ’ phrases) are on safer and more useful ground” (Perriman, “Coming to Terms with Metaphor” 132; cf. also Wenham, *Paul* 185; and Barnabas Mary Ahem, “The Christian's Union with the Body of Christ in Cor, Gal, and Rom,” *CBQ* 33/2 [1961] 199–209). However, see Söding who argues for a Stoic background for the body concept but nevertheless sees it as an expression of the fundamental Pauline theme of being-in-Christ (Söding, “Ihr aber seid der Leib Christi” 152). See now also Clinton E. Arnold, “Jesus Christ: ‘Head’ of the Church (Colossians and Ephesians),” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 346–366.

⁷⁴ I.e. that the literal body of Christ is presently glorified and seated at the Father's right hand in heaven is difficult to square with the Church who still toils in “earthly tents” (2 Cor 5:1). See the discussion in Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology* 232–236.

⁷⁵ Söding, “Ihr aber seid der Leib Christi” 140. Lindemann even argues the case that the exegesis of 1 Corinthians denies any particular significance for the body being “Christ's” in 12:27 (contra E. Käsemann *et al.*). That the body is “Christ's” is only incidental to the “democratic” functions within the Church Paul wants to emphasize (Lindemann, “Die Kirche also Leib” 162).

⁷⁶ G. J. C. Marchant, “The Body of Christ,” *EvQ* 30 (1958) 13; Best, *One Body* 188–192; and Söding, “Ihr aber seid der Leib Christi” 161.

⁷⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness* 209. The Latin term for *perichoresis* is *circumincessio*.

should be seen more in terms of *identity*.⁴ This interpretation is illustrated by appeal in these traditions to Chalcedonian christology whereby the Church, like the God-man, is the mysterious union of the divine and human natures in the eternal person of Christ.⁵

Taken to this extent, the incarnation as an analogy of the church is acceptable to Protestants; there is a divine and human component in the Church's gatherings. But Catholics and Orthodox raise the stakes in their use of incarnation theology to make the claim that the union of divine and human in the Church actually makes a new single acting subject: *one person* with two natures.⁶ The immanence of Christ with his people through the Holy Spirit is the mechanism for this claim as Christ's spirit is literally fashioned as the soul of the body, the Church. Through the Spirit, Christ is organically united to his body, the Church, so that he is with her *totus Christus, caput et membra*, ("the whole Christ, head and members").⁷

Corpus Christi: The Nature of the Church According to the Reformed Tradition (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958). More recently see Thomas Söding, "Ihr aber seid der Leib Christi": Exegetische Beobachtungen an einem zentralen Motiv paulinischer Ekklesiologie," *Catholica* 45 (1991) 135–162 and Andreas Linemann, "Die Kirche als Leib," *ZTK* 92 (1995) 140–165. Söding provides a recent bibliography on the exegesis of the body image.

⁴ The Church as Christ's body is the dominant motif in Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiology for understanding the nature of the Church as sacrament, her catholicity, conciliarity, and infallibility (cf. Yves Congar, "The Church and its Unity," in *The Idea of Catholicism*, ed. Walter Burghardt and William F. Lynch [expanded ed.; Cleveland: World, 1964] 150; and D. E. Lanne, "Le mystère de l'Église dans la perspective de la théologie Orthodoxe," *Irenikon* 35 [1962] 171–212; and A. Kallis, "Kirche V," *TRE* 18:254). Attempts to temper the domination of ecclesiology by the body image in Orthodoxy and Catholicism by giving more attention to other biblical images have not won the day. See the discussion in Söding, "Leib Christi" 136–137 and Lanne.

⁵ In contrast to Protestants, incarnational categories are more fundamental to Orthodox and Catholic ecclesiology. William Lynch describes the Catholic uniqueness in the fundamental human problem of the meeting of the finite with the infinite in Christ and the Church: "In Christ God and man meet and are one person, and the Church claims resolutely, scandalously, to be Christ Himself" ("The Catholic Idea," in *The Idea of Catholicism* 58–59). Avery Dulles describes the Catholic church as "a thoroughly incarnational faith" (*The Catholicity of the Church* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1985] 113). The union of two natures in Christ and the Church also fits well the general "ontological" tendencies within Orthodoxy to identify humanity and God in the process of theosis. See Miroslav Volf's discussion of John D. Zizioulas in *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 73–123, and Danne's discussion of Florovsky's *Le Corps due Christ vivant* in "Le mystère de l'Église" 179.

⁶ Ratzinger, for example, speaks of the Church as "a single subject with Christ" (Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* [London: Burns & Oates, 1969] 179; cited by Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness* 33). See also Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1988) 65–70, who speaks of the Church's conscience as "super-personal" by the Holy Spirit who lives in her, and Georges Florovsky's description of Christ as the "personal centre" of the Church (*Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* [Belmont: Nordland, 1972] 67, emphasis his).

⁷ The statement originates with Augustine: "Cum ergo sit ille caput Ecclesiae, et sit corpus eius Ecclesiae, totus Christus et caput et corpus est" (*Sermo* 137.1 [MPL 38, 754]). On this role of the Spirit for Catholic and Orthodox see, for example, Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism* (New York: Macmillan, 1946) 42; Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* 1–2; Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition* 57–72. Two papal encyclicals (*Divinum illud*, June 20, 1896 [Leo XIII] and *Mystici corporis*, June 29, 1943 [Pius XII]) promulgate the Holy Spirit as the soul of the Church. See the discussion by George S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954) 55–56.

As Catholics and Orthodox alike recognize certain limitations of incarnational analogies,⁸ the question before us must not be only the propriety of the incarnational rhetoric that punctuates their ecclesiology. More to the point is how incarnational categories and the idea of the *totus Christus* function in these traditions to see the Church as fundamentally supernatural and so to ground the sacramental ecclesiology and soteriology that ultimately provoked the Reformation.⁹ Because “Christ, the head, cannot be separated from his body, the Church,” Richard Neuhaus identifies the “Catholic difference” with Protestants in the statement: “For the Catholic, faith in Christ and faith in the Church are one act of faith.”¹⁰ As the “single subject with Christ” in the *totus Christus*, the Church derives her equal authority with Christ to share with him in actually dispensing faith and so extend his saving mission on earth as the “continued incarnation of the heavenly Lord.”¹¹

Does the NT, however, corroborate such claims for the Church? Can ecclesiology indeed be evaluated so “high” where the Church at points functions as a single subject with Christ to continue his soteriological mission? Is an incarnational paradigm useful for ecclesiology, or is it inherently dangerous? The traditional *munus triplex Christi*, the incarnated Christ’s fulfillment of the offices of prophet, priest, and king, will be our primary tool for testing the Church’s incarnational claims because of its focus on the functional rather than ontological aspects of the incarnation.¹² As it is at this level that incarnational claims are made by Orthodox and Catholics, the *munus triplex* offers a unique vantage point from which to compare the degree to which the Church

⁸ Catholics and Orthodox alike deny complete identity and equality of the Church and Christ. Ratzinger, for example, denies that the union of Christ and Church is a “distinctionless identity” (*Gemeinschaft* 36; cited by Volf, *After Our Likeness* 34). Dulles also recognizes that the human element in the Incarnation was not pre-existing persons as is the union of Christ and Church (Dulles, *Catholicity of the Church* 44–45). Bulgakov likewise states, “the Church, although it is the Body of Christ, is not the Christ—the God-man—because it is only his humanity . . .” (*The Orthodox Church* 1). Some even believe the analogy of the incarnation to be so limited as to be “scarcely acceptable” for ecclesiology, but they are a definite minority. See J. M. R. Tillard, “Church and Salvation: On the Sacramentality of the Church,” *One in Christ* 20/4 (1984) 300, n. 14.

⁹ Following Albert Schweitzer, Berkouwer states, “To a Roman Catholic the supernatural is the essence of the Church” (G. C. Berkouwer, *The Conflict with Rome* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958] 22).

¹⁰ Neuhaus, “The Catholic Difference,” in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (ed. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus; Dallas: Word, 1995) 216. Neuhaus’s statement parallels Schleiermacher’s observation made years ago: “For Protestants the individual’s relationship to the Church depends upon a relationship to Jesus Christ, whereas in Catholicism the reverse is true” (Friedrich G. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* [New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963] 103).

¹¹ According to Orthodox theologian Gennadios Limouris the sacramental presence of Christ in his body means the Church is the “continuation of [Christ’s] redemptive work” (G. Limouris, “The Church as Mystery—in Ecclesiological Perspectives,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 2 [Oct. 1988] 245; cf. A. Kallis, “Kirche V,” *TRE* 18:254). The Church as “*Christus prolongatus*,” “the extension of the incarnation,” etc., is a common rubric in Catholic theology as well.

¹² Though it is rarely a category for Christological reflection in the newer systematic theologies, with Berkouwer a case could be made for Christ’s offices of prophet, priest, and king as a useful tool of Christological inquiry when applied with the necessary caveats. See G. C. Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 58–88.

may justifiably contend for itself as *Christus prolongatus*. From the *munus triplex* I will argue that the NT is fundamentally resistant to the manner in which incarnational categories press ecclesiology toward the identity of Christ and Church, and further, that the NT itself suggests a different category to understand Christ's relationship to his Church.

I. CHRIST AND CHURCH AS PROPHET

In the simplest of terms the biblical prophet was the Spirit-inspired spokesman of God, who made known God's truth. In the NT there can be no doubt that Jesus was understood by his contemporaries and understood himself as one of these who "speaks the words of God" (John 3:34).¹³ Similarly, there can be no doubt that the subject of his proclamation was the good news of the inbreaking of God's promised *basileia*: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).¹⁴ The NT also reveals that after his exaltation Jesus continues to speak his message to the world through his spirit in his church (Luke 10:16; John 16:12–14). This very thing the Church of Acts continues to do in its proclamation of *Jesus as the Christ*.¹⁵

1. *Self-Reflectivity*. Two features in the nature of the Church's proclamation show, however, that incarnational ecclesiology cannot sustain its drive toward identity of Church and Christ and that ecclesiology must be subordinate to Christology in a way different from what it is in Catholicism and Orthodoxy. First is the issue of self-reflectivity. Self-reflectivity in the prophetic office means that while Christ, the incarnate one, preaches God's truth, he also declares that he himself *is* the truth. While he preaches God's way, he declares that he *is* the way. While he preaches God's abundant life, he also preaches that he himself *is* that life (John 14:16). He preaches the kingdom of God, and as Origen of Alexandria noted so long ago,

¹³ On Jesus as prophet in the NT see, for example, Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ* 66–69; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1991) esp. 160–168; and Marinus de Jonge, *Christology in Context: The Earliest Christian Response to Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988) 154–165.

¹⁴ In concert with the Biblical writers' summaries of Jesus' proclamation (e.g. Matt 4:17; 9:35) it is now customary for critical scholarship to admit the centrality of the apocalyptic message of the Kingdom in the proclamation of the historical Jesus. See my *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1997).

¹⁵ There is no contradiction in the early Christian proclamation of the crucified and resurrected Christ and Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God as was supposed by earlier NT critics. In Acts, the Church did not betray her Lord's forty days of instruction on the Kingdom by immediately preaching something else. As summary statements in Acts reveal, preaching Jesus as the Christ *was* preaching the Kingdom (cf. Acts 8:5, 12; 28:23, 31). This is particularly evident in Acts 20:24–25 where Paul's "testifying solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (v. 24) is parallel to his "preaching the kingdom" (v. 25).

he in a unique sense is the kingdom, the *autobasileia*, of his own proclamation (cf. Luke 11:20, 21; 17:21).¹⁶

In contrast, the Church of the NT never proclaims her message in such a self-reflective manner.¹⁷ With an incredible variety of terminology the Church always and without fail preaches Christ, and never herself. The Church “proclaims” (Acts 8:5), “preaches” (Acts 5:42), “testifies” (Acts 18:5), “convinces others” (Acts 28:23), “shows” (Acts 18:28), “teaches” (Acts 28:31), “remembers” (2 Tim 2:8), and “confesses” (1 Cor 12:3) that Jesus is the Christ. Like the incarnated Christ, the Church’s proclamation is at the same time a theocentric message of the “gospel of God” (1 Thess 2:9, cf. Mark 1:14). In the NT, however, the ἐκκλησία is never the object of such activity or the subject of her own proclaimed message. In her message, the Church is Christocentric and theocentric, but never ecclesiocentric.

This NT pattern of theocentric and Christocentric, but not ecclesiocentric, proclamation continues when we consider the Church’s missionary call to faith.¹⁸ In the early Christian testimony we find, contra Neuhaus, for example, that the call to “believe in” (Rom 10:11), “have faith in” (Mark 11:22), or “call upon” (Rom 10:13) is never directed to the ἐκκλησία or any object other than God or Christ.¹⁹ Other descriptions of our common salvation are similarly never ecclesially-oriented. Salvation is a knowledge of God and/or Christ (John 17:3); it is hoping in Christ (Eph 1:12); receiving Christ (John

¹⁶ Origen of Alexandria, *Matt. tom XIV*, 7 on Matt 18:23; cited by K. L. Schmidt, “βασιλεία,” *TDNT* 1:589. See also Robert Recker, “The Redemptive Focus of the Kingdom of God,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 14 (1979) 171.

¹⁷ See James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 179–180.

¹⁸ As Michel notes, the Church’s proclamation extended beyond the announcement of Jesus’ Messiahship. It called for faith in him as the Messiah. “The frequent use of *pisteuō eis*, believe in (e.g., Gal 2:16; John 1:12; 3:18), in the vocabulary of mission, is a striking departure from ordinary Greek and the LXX . . . ‘Repentance from dead works’ and ‘faith in God’ were important elements in the teaching of the Christian catechism (Heb 6:1). More important is the pointed use of *pistis* in the context of Pauline theology to denote the reception of Christian proclamation and the saving faith which was called forth by the gospel (Rom 1:8; 1 Thess 1:8). For Paul *pistis* is indissolubly bound with proclamation. Early Christian missionary preaching thus brought faith into sharp focus” (O. Michel, “Faith,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* ed. Colin Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, 1:599).

¹⁹ The only objects of πιστεύω (with εἰς, ἐπί, or ἐν) and its cognates in its 60+ occurrences in the NT are “God,” “Jesus,” “the Lord Jesus Christ,” “the Lord,” “the Light,” “his name,” “the son of God,” “him who raised Jesus from the dead,” and the apostolic “witness.” The apparent object of the πίστις εἰς ἀ πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους in Philemon 5 (“ . . . because I hear of your love, of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all the saints”) is not favored by the grammarians. See Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1982) 278–279.

Πιστεύομεν εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν is the formula fixed in the Nicea-Constantinople creed and part of the Orthodox liturgy to this day. In relation to the creed, however, Raimond Lülisdorf argues that both Catholics and Orthodox would back away from equating belief in the Church to belief in the Trinity. To believe in the holy, catholic Church in both eastern and western Church fathers means to believe that there is a holy, catholic Church. Lülisdorf does admit, however, that both eastern and western churches have over emphasized the divine aspect of ecclesiology. See Raimund Lülisdorf, “Glauben an die Kirche?” *Catholica* 45/2 (1991) 119–134.

As Holmberg has noted, the apostles’ continuous appeal is that their readers develop a relationship with the *gospel*. This is the *ratio* common for all believers (Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power*:

1:12); it is abiding in Christ (John 15:1–5), putting on Christ (Gal 3:27), partaking of Christ (Heb 3:14), and being baptized into Christ (1 Cor 12:13).²⁰ It is “having” God (2 John 9).

So also is the converse of Neuhaus’s statement not reflected in Scripture, for just as the Church is not the object of faith to obtain salvation, so she is not the object of rejection determining one’s damnation. It is rejection of the Holy Spirit, not the Church, that may not be pardoned (Mark 3:29 par.).

Far from equating faith in Christ to faith in the Church, as incarnational categories enable Neuhaus to do, we observe that it is exactly on the issue of faith that the NT itself calls for a clear distinction between Christ and his Church. The Church is founded and hence dependent on her faith in Christ. As the foundation of the Church’s faith, Christ remains independent of the Church in the faith act.²¹ It is precisely from such a dependent posture that the Church calls for or “mediates” faith. Volf elaborates the true ecclesial role in faith saying, “it is from the church that one receives the content of faith, and it is in the church that one learns how faith is to be understood and lived. This ecclesial activity of mediation is meaningful, however, only if it leads one to entrust one’s life to God in faith.”²²

2. *The Holy Spirit and prophecy.* The role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation and the Church is another matter addressed within the prophetic office as it is by means of the Spirit that the prophet utters the Lord’s words (e.g. Isa 61:1-3; and esp. Zech 7:12: “. . . the law and the words of the Lord of hosts sent by his *ruach* through the former prophets”). As noted above, within the incarnational paradigms of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, the immanence of Christ’s spirit in the body is the means to press for a single personality in the Church.²³ Yet, when we consider the Spirit’s role in the respective proclamations of both Christ and the Church, an incarnational pattern again cannot be maintained. To start, it is by the Holy Spirit that the Church confesses the Lordship of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:3), not the lordship (i.e. authority) of the Church. Instead of functioning to affirm an identity of Church and Christ which ends up relegating the Holy Spirit to a mere basis

The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles [Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978] 155).

²⁰ “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . .” Barrett notes that the Corinthians were not baptized into the body, but baptized into Christ *so as to become* a body (with the “*εἰς* not local, but describing the results of the process”; C. K. Barrett, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [New York: Harper & Row, 1968] 288).

²¹ Moltmann states, “Christ as foundation of faith is indeed only evident in faith; but equally, as the foundation he has a position independent of faith, thanks to which he calls forth faith without being dependent on it” (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* [New York: Harper & Row, 1977] 371–72, n. 11). Moltmann notes the similar thought in G. Ebeling (*Theology and Proclamation: A Discussion with R. Boltmann* 96): “the basis of the church, i.e., that which makes the church the church, is not the church itself; in just the same way as it is impossible for the basis of the church to exist without the church, and for the church to exist without its basis . . .”

²² Volf, *After Our Likeness* 163.

²³ See note 7 above.

of the Church's authority, a kind of possession of the Church that really is Christ's successor, the Holy Spirit's actual inspiring ministry in Scripture leads us the other way. On this point Hendry has rightly stated that:

In the New Testament the authority of the Holy Spirit is an authority to which the Church remains subject; it is the principle of the Church's obedience . . . for the Church of the New Testament did not experience the Spirit as an immanent principle for which it succeeded to the authority of its Lord but as a presence in whom its living Lord continues to exercise his own authority.²⁴

This authoritative role of the Spirit over the Church is further demonstrated in the unique ministry of the Spirit in the Lord's apostles by the way they stand over the Church. As the Lord's *shaliachim*, or sent ones, the Twelve and Paul²⁵ were promised they would be fully equipped and empowered for their task as Jesus' witnesses to uniquely found his Church (John 14:12, 18, 23, 25–26; 16:12–14). The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost marked the beginning of their function in this capacity (cf. Acts 1:8), a fact to which the first twelve chapters of Acts offer eloquent testimony. Because of their close association with the supremely authoritative Christ and their obvious possession of charismatic power, the apostles were clearly the Holy Spirit's unique agents of the good news of Christ.²⁶ Their mediation of their Lord's doctrine, both orally and in their writings, alone comprises the *tradition* which the NT recognizes as authoritative for the Church.²⁷ Such was also the clear belief and practice of the earliest post-apostolic Church.²⁸

It is this unique standing of the Spirit-inspired apostles *vis-à-vis* the rest of the Church that came after them or that existed contemporaneous to them that is stunted when incarnational categories determine ecclesiology. For

²⁴ Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* 57.

²⁵ The Twelve and Paul, and possibly a few others. The point is debated.

²⁶ On the unique pneumatic authority of the Twelve and Paul, see David P. Scaer, *The Apostolic Scriptures* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971); and N. Geldenhuis, *Supreme Authority: The Authority of the Lord, His Apostles and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953).

²⁷ Several points may be offered in evidence. First, it is the apostles' tradition/interpretation of the Christ-event, not extra-apostolic interpretations, that is equal in authority to the prophetic voice of the OT as "the writings" (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 3:16; Scaer, *Apostolic Scriptures* 41–43; see further evidence for this in Matt 10:41–42). Second, nothing of the Church after or alongside the apostolic mediation of the tradition claims or even attempts to claim the quality of "God-breathed" (θεόπνευστος, 2 Tim 3:16; cf. 2 Pet 1:20–21). And third, in tests of false doctrine, the NT recognizes only the apostles' tradition itself, the *depositum fidei*, as final arbiter, not that tradition as it was later worked over and taught through an ecclesial office (cf. 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 17). The Scriptures are their own interpreter. The apostolic doctrine may be known also by the fruit it produces. True doctrine was evident in its propositional adherence to kerygmatic tradition and whether it manifested love and building up of the body (Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 293–297).

Further qualifying the authority of any church-mediated "tradition" is the teaching of the NT, noted by several, that it is the gospel itself that is of ultimate authority and that even apostolic authority derives from it (Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 276–277; Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1969] 40; C. K. Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle* [London: Epworth, 1970] 92–97, 110).

²⁸ The use, or rather non-use, of Christian agrapha by the Apostolic Fathers (2 citations of Christian agrapha versus more than 80 citations of the canonical apostolic tradition [Geldenhuis, *Supreme Authority* 100–101, n. 4]) clearly demonstrates the judgment of the earliest Church regarding the status of extra-apostolic *vis-à-vis* apostolic "traditions." Into the second century, as Harnack notes,

although the one spirit of Christ inhabits the entire body of the *ekklésia*, as the incarnation indeed is a model, all parts of the body do not actually manifest or present the person of her head. The Spirit's function of inspiring the apostles to infallibly interpret the life and ministry of Jesus Christ for the rest of the Church for all time in the canonical NT record is evidence of this point (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21). It is a radically different ministry of the Spirit, with a corresponding radically different level of authority in the results, that enables the once-for-all mediation, i.e. production, of inspired tradition and that ministry which enables faithfulness to that tradition in the later reception and interpretations of it. Herein is the substance of the Protestant critique of Catholic and Orthodox notions of tradition which lose this critical distinction of the Spirit's inspiring ministry in the production of the apostolic Scriptures and his ministry in the post-apostolic Church that received, recognized, and interpreted them.²⁹ Both events issue from the same Spirit, but Scripture itself indicates that both do not have the same degree of faithfulness to the Church's Head in the final product.

3. *Summary.* The prophetic office reveals the degree of distinction between the Church and Christ the NT demands for ecclesiology. The Church's message is always and only theocentric or Christocentric, never ecclesiocentric. So also the Church may not edge her way into the faith act according to an incarnational theologizing. Faith in the Church is not the NT missionary proclamation. In fact, it is just the opposite: faith in Christ is the foundation of the Church. Finally, incarnational ecclesiology leads us in wrong directions in the Spirit's relationship with the Church by subsuming the Spirit under ecclesiology and improperly distinguishing between the Spirit's role in the apostles' writings and the Church that followed them.

II. CHRIST AND CHURCH AS PRIEST

In the Biblical understanding, the priest makes approach to God possible through the offering of sacrifice and gifts to God on behalf of men (cf. Heb 7:25; 8:3; 9:11–28). It is especially in the office of priest that incarnation is tied to redemption, as the God-man, who is the Priest, is also himself the blameless

"the Holy Spirit and the apostles become correlative conceptions, with the consequence that the Scriptures of the New Testament were indifferently regarded as composed by the Holy Spirit or the apostles" (*Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* 1, 177; cited by Geldenhuys, *Supreme Authority* 107, n. 1).

²⁹ The loss of the distinction is visible in the statement of the German Catholic bishops in response to perceived protestantizing tendencies in some Catholic ecumenists: "For the catholic understanding of the faith" only "the whole of the historically developed faith of the church" is the criterion of teaching, and not merely the historically first phase of the faith documented in Scripture ("Das Ganze des gewordenen Glaubens der Kirche"; "Glaubenskommission der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz zum 'Amtsmemorandum,'" *Herderkorrespondenz* 27:159; cited in Jenson, *Unbaptized God* 115). Similar confusing of the Spirit's ministry in the apostles with his ministry in the post-apostolic church is apparent in Eastern Orthodoxy. See John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (Crestwood: St. Valdimir's Seminary, 1981) 6–7. That the NT is something more than the "historically first phase of the faith" was the reason why the Reformation took place!

sacrifice (John 1:29; cf. 1 Pet 1:18; Heb 9:11–28). Through the offering of himself, Christ brings the benefits of salvation to those for whom he mediates.³⁰ What of the Church? Does the NT evidence move us in the direction of identity for Christ and the Church in the priestly office? Three strands of evidence indicate that although the Church may lay claim to herself being a priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) performing priestly ministries (witness: 2 Cor 5:20; sacrifice: Rom 12:1–2; Luke 9:23; Heb 13:15; Rom 15:16; intercession: Acts 8:21; Jas 5:14; Rom 10:11; Acts 7:60), the NT reveals a distance between Christ and his Church inconsistent with incarnational categories.³¹

1. *The mediation of salvation's benefits.* The exclusively theo- and Christocentricity of the entire NT witness on this subject begins with the fact that only Christ or God are "Savior" (σωτήρ).³² From this position flows the corresponding place of the Church in the question of the mediation of salvation's benefits. In the NT it is always Christ, never the ἐκκλησία, who is the single subject of salvific activities. *Christ* "died for" (Rom 5:6), "loves" (or loved; Eph 5:2), "accepted" (Rom 15:7), "redeemed" (Gal 3:13), "heals" (Acts 9:34),³³ "nourishes" (Eph 5:29), "cherishes" (Eph 5:29), "laid hold of" (Phil 3:12), "gives light to" (Eph 5:14), "came to save" (1 Tim 1:15), "gave himself for" (Titus 2:14), "suffered for" (1 Pet 2:21), "was sacrificed for" (1 Cor 5:7) *the Church*. It is he that "set us free" (Gal 5:1) and "gives us peace and love with faith" (Eph 6:23). To this list must be added the key provisions of our reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18) and propitiation (1 John 2:1–2; 4:9–10), which again are accomplished by Christ and God alone according to the NT. Finally, against incarnational ecclesiology, saving faith is never presented in the NT as the gift of the ἐκκλησία, but as the gift of God (Eph 2:8–9; Phil 1:29).³⁴ Thus, the NT itself seems to be at odds with *totus Christus* ecclesiology that sees the Roman mass, for example, as the re-presentation of "an offering to the Father which is presented by *the whole Christ (totus Christus)*, by the Head and the members."³⁵

³⁰ In this regard see Berkouwer's discussion in *The Work of Christ* 69–72.

³¹ "Distance" is not meant to suggest separateness or aloofness as in a devaluation of the rich communion the Church has with Christ.

³² Luke 1:47 (God); 2:11; John 4:42; Acts 5:31; 13:23; Eph 5:23; Phil 3:20; 1 Tim 1:1 (God); 2:3 (God); 4:10 (God); 2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:3 (God); 1:4; 2:10 (God); 2:13; 3:4 (God); 3:6; 2 Pet 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:2; 3:18; 1 John 4:14; and Jude 25 (God).

³³ "And Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise and make your bed . . .'" Apostolic healing in the name of Jesus was indication of their understanding of Jesus as the healer. For example, Peter who heals in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6) can also proclaim "Jesus Christ heals you" (ἰάσῃ; Acts 9:34). Paul similarly heals. His acts of healing (ἰάσῃ; Acts 28:8) derive from God the healer of his people (Acts 28:27).

³⁴ "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Eph 2:8–9); "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in him, . . ." (Phil 1:29). See Volf, *After Our Likeness* 39–41, for a discussion of Ratzinger's contention that the Church's administration of the sacraments gives faith.

³⁵ From the Roman Catholic response to the WCC's Faith and Order paper, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), *Churches Respond to BEM* (ed. Max Thurian; Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1986) 6:20; cited in Jenson, *Unbaptized God* 95.

This is not to say that the Church has no function in NT soteriology or that a “mothering” or “fathering” role of some kind may not be ascribed to her.³⁶ But there is a radical difference between a Church that “gives” belief through the sacraments and one that preaches the *word* that causes faith (Rom 10:17). First Corinthians 4:15 establishes the *Christocentric* measure by which the Church’s spiritual “fatherhood” and “motherhood” must be qualified. The apostle says, “. . . for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” Here, as Barrett notes, “Christ is the agent and the gospel is the means by which men are brought to new life.”³⁷ Thus, again we see how it is that the Church may have a “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18), but she herself never “reconciles,” “redeems,” or “propitiates” anyone. Neither is she “our life” (Col 3:4).

2. *A suffering that atones.* In addition to the image of the body, the case for a more ontological relationship between Christ and the Church has been made in Christ’s identification with the Church in her sufferings (e.g. Acts 9:4). Similarly, the apostle Paul contends that in his own sufferings for the Colossians (ὄπερ ὑμῶν) he is filling up that which is lacking in Messiah’s afflictions (Col 1:24).³⁸ However, it is precisely when the Church’s sufferings are viewed in the light of the priestly office that the ship of incarnational theologizing again runs aground.

First, while there is not to be denied a certain correspondence between the sufferings of the Church and Christ, a *participatio Christi*, there attains an even greater dissimilarity in terms of atoning value. Barth’s comment is apt in relating the Church’s sufferings to those of Christ.

The cross of Jesus is His own cross, carried and suffered *for* many, but *by* Him alone and not by many . . . He suffers this rejection not merely as a rejection by men but, fulfilled by men, as a rejection by God—the rejection which all others deserved and ought to have suffered, but which He bore in order that it should no more fall on them. Their cross does not mean that they have still to suffer God’s rejection. . . . They exist only—and this is quite enough—in the echo of his sentence, the shadow of his judgment, the after-pains of his rejection. In their cross they have only a small subsequent taste of what the world and they themselves deserved at the hand of God, and Jesus endured in all its frightfulness as their Head in their place.³⁹

³⁶ Paul describes himself as “father” in 1 Cor 4:14–15; 2 Cor 6:13; 2 Thess 2:11; Phlm 10 and “mother” in Gal 4:19; cf. 1 Thess 2:7.

³⁷ Barrett, *First Corinthians* 115. Volf adds to this the fact that Paul is “father” or “mother” as an *individual apostle*. Thus, “the mother church does *not* stand *over* individual Christians; rather Christians *are* the mother church” (Volf, *After Our Likeness* 166 [emphasis his]).

³⁸ “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake [ὄπερ ὑμῶν], and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of his body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.” Cf. also on this count Paul’s desire to join with the fellowship of Messiah’s sufferings in Phil 3:10. The Colossians passage is of particular significance, as it is the one instance where the atonement formula ὄπερ ὑμῶν of someone other than Christ (see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958] IV/2, 601).

³⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, 600, 604.

Second, as Barth's statement attests, it is only in the light of the supreme value of Christ's suffering for others that we understand the Church's own suffering and her Lord's identification with her. Specifically the Church suffers as witnesses (μάρτυρες), and as shown earlier, witnesses to Christ, not herself.⁴⁰ It is in this manner that Paul suffers for his readers. In bearing his own cross as a special member of the body, Paul is appointed to testify in his creatureliness to what must take place in the Church as the earthly-historical correspondence to Christ's passion. But, as Barth notes, the ἐκκλησία does not suffer as a second Head. The Church's sufferings are distinctly her own and not a repetition or re-presentation of the cross of Christ. They point to Christ.⁴¹ It is within this uniquely Christological and not ecclesiological focus to suffering in the NT that we are to understand Christ's merciful identification with his Church (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). As M. Barth states,

It is and remains *his* glory, of and in which the church lives. That the risen Christ identifies himself with the persecuted church is one thing; in his mercy he can and will proclaim his presence in the church that appears so helpless. That the church extols herself to almost divine rank by considering herself identical with Christ is another thing.⁴²

3. *A pure sacrifice.* The incarnated Logos was the God-man who, on the basis of his personal holiness, was able to offer an effectual sacrifice (cf. Heb 4:15; 7:27; 9:14). It is, however, at the point of holiness that the NT refuses the incarnational paradigm of the Church moving as a single subject with Christ. The fact that it is the sin-plagued Corinthian church that Paul calls Christ's body has been grounds for Protestants since Luther to argue that the church, like the individual believer, is *simul iustus et peccator*.⁴³ Orthodox and Catholics alike do not abide such terminology for the Church,

⁴⁰ Cf. Acts 1:8: the apostles are Christ's μάρτυρες.

⁴¹ The text and context of Paul's recounting of his own sufferings and self-crucifixion (Gal 2:20; 5:24; 6:14, 17; 2 Cor 4:10 Rom 6:8; Col 3:5) "completely exclude any idea of an interchangeability of Christ and the Christian, the Head and the member, the One who leads and the one who follows. They refer to a hard and painful and even mortal but redemptive attack which must and is and will be made on the Christian in fellowship with the suffering and crucified Christ, so that his whole life is determined and marked and characterized by its influence and effects. But the suffering which come on Christians, the cross to which they are nailed, the death which they have to die, is always *their* suffering, *their* cross, *their* death, just as the salvation which accompanies it is *their* salvation won for them and brought to them in the suffering and cross and death of Christ on their behalf [ἀντὶ πολλῶν]" (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, 601). Similarly, Best notes that it would be illogical for Paul to mention anything that might take away from the supremacy of Christ's sufferings he had just asserted (Best, *One Body* 135–136). On Paul's filling up that which was lacking in Christ's sufferings as a reference to the apocalyptic concept of the messianic woes associated with the last days, see O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* 77–81.

⁴² M. Barth, "A Chapter on the Church" 145 (emphasis his).

⁴³ Luther even stated, "non est tam magna peccatrix ut Christiana ecclesia" ("there is no sinner so great as the Christian church"; WA 34/1, 276). Others who make this point are Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 94; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 71.

countering it by doctrine of the mystery *corporis Christi*. According to Meyendorff, “the mystery of the Church consists precisely in the fact that sinners, coming together, form the *infallible Church* . . .”⁴⁴ However, the unsuitability of incarnational theology for such an assertion is clear even in the comments by Orthodox theologian Gennadios Limouris:

The dogma of Chalcedon must be applied to the Church as well as to Christ. Just as Christ the God-Man has two natures—divine and human—so in the Church there is a *synergia* or cooperation between the two that the one is perfect and sinless, while the other is *not yet fully so*. Only a part of the humanity of the Church—the saints in heaven—has attained perfection, while here on earth the Church’s members often misuse their human freedom. The Church on earth exists in a state of tension: it is already the Body of Christ, and thus perfect and sinless, and yet, since its members are imperfect and sinful, it must continually become what it is.⁴⁵

It is just this tension to which Catholics and Orthodox admit that demonstrates there are two acting subjects in the mystery union of Christ and the Church. Herein is the inadequacy and even the danger of incarnational categories for ecclesiology. Inadequacy, because in the hypostatic union the Logos took upon himself true human *nature*, but not a sinful human *person*. The result of that union was and is today a visible, complete, bodily holiness, not a proleptic one still being “formed” in his body as in the case with the Church (cf. Gal 4:19).⁴⁶ And it was a holiness that never sought forgiveness for its own sins.⁴⁷ Further, the question of the Church’s holiness betrays the danger of incarnational ecclesiology in that the more we press for an identity of Christ and the Church, the more we threaten the Lord’s own divine spontaneous freedom. Merged with other free subjects, Christ’s own freedom is compromised.⁴⁸

4. *Summary.* The soteriological implications of the office of priest also argue against an incarnational ecclesiology. In her own priestly functions, there is no way the Church can claim to act as a single subject with Christ. She cannot claim to bestow salvation’s benefits. Her suffering, like her faith, is dependent on Christ’s own separate suffering. Finally, that she is a body only moving toward holiness in her history shows the inadequacy and even the danger of incarnational categories for ecclesiology.

III. CHRIST AND CHURCH AS KING

The king was the ruler for God. In the biblical context this office had both an internal and an external function: chief of the army against foreign en-

⁴⁴ Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church* 221; cf. also Limouris, “The Church as Mystery” 258.

⁴⁵ Limouris, “The Church as Mystery” 258 (italics mine).

⁴⁶ In this regard see Thomas Sartory, “Die Gefahr der Kategorie des ‘Inkarnatorischen’ für die Ekklesiologie,” in *Ich glaube an eine Heilige Kirche* (ed. Walter Bauer et al.; Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1963) 67–68.

⁴⁷ On thinks here of the recent (May 21, 1995) apology the People issued on behalf of the Catholic Church for wrongs inflicted on non-Catholics in Moravia.

⁴⁸ Sartory, “Die Gefahr der Kategorie des ‘Inkarnatorischen’” 66.

emies and supreme judge at home.⁴⁹ The NT makes it clear that Jesus is God's anointed βασιλεύς with a kingdom (e.g. Luke 1:30–33; 19:11–26; John 18:36; Heb 2:7–9). The resurrection and ascension events affirm his exaltation to the Father's right hand with full regal authority in his domain.⁵⁰ While the Church cannot yet lay claim to a present "reign" (1 Cor 4:8),⁵¹ there still is a correspondence she has with Christ's authority. To the Church have been given the "keys to the Kingdom" by her Lord (Matt 16:19). Whatever she forgives on earth will be forgiven in heaven, whatever she retains on earth will be retained in heaven (Matt 18:18). But should the relationship of authority between Christ and his Church be made in terms of her identity with Christ? Again, the NT evidence seems to say no. Two lines of evidence argue this way.

1. *Self-reflectivity.* In terms of authority, theo- and Christocentricity, not ecclesiocentricity, is the posture of the NT. Christ and God, not the ἐκκλησία, are "king." The kingdom is "God's" and "Christ's," never the Church's. Christ, not the Church, is "master," "Lord," "head of every man," "cornerstone," and "foundation." *He* "judges the living and the dead." It is Jesus' name, not the Church's, that must be confessed before society and in the Christian community (Mark 13:13 par.; Matt 10:22; Luke 21:12; John 15:21; Acts 9:16; 1 Pet 4:14–19). In the NT Christ claims for himself an honor equal to the Father (John 5:23). He makes himself an object of belief equal to his Father who sent him (John 14:1). Finally, it is Christ, not the Church, who has "all" authority (Matt 28:19).

This last point is significant, because it calls forth a particular feature in Christ's relationship to his Church, viz. that the ἐκκλησία is subject to Christ's supreme authority and is to obey him. This is the important new element in the *sōma*-conception of Ephesians and Colossians. The Church's

⁴⁹ A. R. Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (ed. S. H. Hooke; Oxford: Clarendon, 1958) 205. Per Beskow summarizes the functions normally associated with the concept of "king" as exalted judge, ruler, and conqueror (Beskow, *Rex Gloria: The Kingdom of Christ in the Early Church* [Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1962] 38). See further Gerhard Dellling, "ὑποτάσσω," *TDNT* 8:42; Ludwig-Schmidt, "Königtum," *TRE* 19:328 and H. Lesetre, "Roi," *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (ed. F. Vigouroux; Paris: Letouzey & Ane, 1912) 5/1, col. 1122.

⁵⁰ More than any other, the regal context of Ps 110 (vv. 1 and 4) informed NT writers' reflection on the state and function of the ascended Christ. There are more citations and allusions to this Psalm in the NT than to any other OT passage (five direct citations: Matt 22:44=Mark 12:36=Luke 20:42–43; Acts 2:34; Heb 1:13; and fourteen allusions: Matt 26:64=Mark 14:62=Luke 22:69; Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55–56; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22).

⁵¹ "You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you." An argument can be made that reigning activity also does not attain to the present status of the risen Christ either. Outside of 1 Cor 15:24–25, which is itself debatable, the NT ascribes no "reigning" language to the present activity of Christ. The βασιλεύς-word group applied to Christ is present in the Gospels (e.g. Luke 1:33; 19:14) but disappears except for contexts of Christ's future advent and rule (e.g. 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 11:15, 17). What we do see of the risen Christ is the NT is a strong priestly function in the present period, not a kingly one. See my "Exaltation Christology in Hebrews: What kind of Reign?" *Trinity Journal* NS 14 (1993) 41–62 and *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* 108–112, 345–347.

submission to Christ is the clear teaching of the NT and a point to which all sides would adhere.⁵² It is also a point, however, that especially brings out that the Church and Christ are two distinct acting subjects, not one. Viering is surely correct when he writes, “the element of obedience is the sharp impassable boundary-line against any church speculation [regarding identity with Christ].”⁵³ The Church is to submit to her Lord as a free and willing subject, a subject that, as we saw earlier, can still succumb to the flesh and sin; is still being transformed in her mind (Rom 12:1–2), and still needs Christ formed in her (Gal 6:14). It is in this way that she goes into the world to carry out her Lord’s commands, not as a single subject with him.

2. *Pneumatology and eschatology.* The question of authority raised by an incarnational ecclesiology also has a bearing on pneumatology, a point alluded to earlier in our discussion of the prophetic office. According to incarnational ecclesiology, the Church is Christ’s exclusive successor, the continuation of his mission as his body, because his authority has been transferred to her by his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of authority, the divine principle of authority empowering the Church in the same mission with the same mandate that Christ had received from the Father. As noted earlier, the problem with this paradigm is that as long as the Spirit is merely the *Church’s* soul, the means of power for the *Church* to fulfill Christ’s mission, he is not her Lord who stands over and above her and confronts her. He is her possession, and pneumatology is the prisoner of ecclesiology.⁵⁴

Apart from the problems such a view presents to Chalcedonian Christology,⁵⁵ it is really Biblical eschatology that demonstrates the error in imprisoning the Spirit in the Church. In the OT, it is the distinctive role of Yahweh’s *ruach* to consummate or apply the works of God. He makes the

⁵² Believers are Christ’s “martyrs” (Rev 17:6), “ministers” (Rom 15:16), “soldiers” (2 Tim 2:3), “prisoners” (Eph 3:1), “servants” (δῆακονοι, 2 Cor 11:23), and “bondservants” (δοῦλος, Gal 1:10). They “confess Jesus as Lord” (1 Cor 12:3), “put on Christ” (Gal 3:27), “serve Christ” (Col 3:24), “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14), “are converted to Christ” (Rom 16:5), “belong to Christ” (Gal 5:24), “obey Christ” (1 Pet 1:2), “learn Christ” (Eph 4:20), and “sanctify Christ as Lord” (1 Pet 3:15). All interpreters, however, would not see the Church’s submission to Christ from the head and body concepts in Ephesians. See for example, Francis Grob, “L’image du corps et de la tête dans l’Épître aux Ephésiens,” *ETR* 58/4 (1983) 491–500, who sees Christ’s headship in Ephesians as a concept with more eschatological bearing than ecclesial.

⁵³ F. Chr. Viering, *Evangelische und Katholische Schriftauslegung* (1938) 86; cited by Berkouwer, *Conflict with Rome* 28. Cf. the similar remarks of R. Eduard Schweizer in “Body,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992) 1:771.

⁵⁴ It should be recognized that this is an issue more pronounced in Roman than in orthodox ecclesiology. While both Orthodox and Catholics see the Spirit as central to the Church’s constitution as the mysterious body and *totus Christus* and the church as the *Christus prolongatus*, the Orthodox view of the *filioque* controversy has made them more open to the Spirit’s authority over and independence of the church. See the discussion in Jenson, *Unbaptized God* 132–137.

⁵⁵ Moltmann’s comments are to be noted in this regard: “The model of the church as *Christus prolongatus* proceeds from the incarnation of the Logos in Jesus of Nazareth and understands the

Word and design of God a tangible and physical reality.⁵⁶ In such a role, the Spirit is naturally in the fore when God consummates his historical works in the eschaton. The overall character of the future age promised in the OT is wholly Spirit-conditioned. As Eichrodt notes, the coming of the Spirit is “the central miracle of the new age . . .”⁵⁷ The Spirit is “God-at-the-end-of-the-world, God reigning over his people at the Last Time, God creating and sustaining a community in whom mankind can be enlightened by faith and return to him in worship and love as the first fruits of a new creation. . . .”⁵⁸

It is precisely the Spirit as the one who applies God’s reign over his people that is missed in an incarnational ecclesiological reading of the NT. The NT itself, however, refused such a reading, as it is the Spirit who is the direct successor of Christ (John 16:7), not the Church. The Church’s mission is dependent on his, not vice versa. The Spirit is not simply the facilitator of the Church’s authority, the channel of Christ’s authority to his Church, or the principle of her empowerment. Not her possession, he is her maker (1 Cor 12:13), guide (Acts 8:29, 39; 10:19; 11:12), oracle revealing the future (John 16:13), and he is her judge (Acts 5:3–11).⁵⁹ In Scripture, it is the Spirit who stands over and above the Church as the true “mother” of believers giving birth to God’s spiritual offspring (John 3:5–8).⁶⁰ Similarly, according to Scripture, it is blasphemy of the Spirit, not the Church, that is the unpardonable transgression (Mark 3:29 par.). Something is very wrong for pneumatology when Karl Adam, for example, proclaims that “the certitude of Catholic faith rests on the sacred triad: God, Christ, Church,” and when Sergius Bulgakov says of the *epiklēsis* that “the Church has the power to invoke the Holy Spirit in the sacraments.”⁶¹

church as the continuation of that incarnation. But it is then very difficult to capture the necessary difference between the incarnation of the Logos and Christ’s indwelling in his Church through the Spirit. Either the incarnation must be reduced to an indwelling of the Spirit in Jesus, which is then continued in the Spirit’s indwelling in the Church; or the indwelling of the Spirit must be understood as the continued incarnation of the Logos. In most cases the otherness of Christ, his mission, his death and his future for the church are all shut out . . . in these ideas pneumatology and Christology slide into one another and merge to such an extent that their difference and solidarity within the Trinity is no longer visible. The particular work of the Spirit is subordinated to the work of Christ” (Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* 73).

⁵⁶ On the activity of the Lord’s Spirit in revealing the Lord’s plans for the temple (1 Chron 28:12–19), see Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995) 194–195; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961) 2:61. This point must be qualified by the notion of *periochoretic* participation of all the members of the Trinity in the work of God. See below.

⁵⁷ Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT* 2:59.

⁵⁸ R. P. C. Hanson, “The Divinity of the Holy Spirit,” *New Theology* 7 (New York: Macmillan) 200.

⁵⁹ This point is emphasized by Barth who notes that in 1 Cor 12 three references to the Holy Spirit precede and rule the discourse on the church, the body of Christ: the act of confession of Jesus and Lord (v. 3); the dispensing of gifts (v. 11); and baptism (v. 13) (Markus Barth, “A Chapter on the Church” 146).

⁶⁰ The lines of separation between Christ and Church blur extensively in the *Mater Ecclesia* doctrine of Catholicism and Orthodoxy. See, for example, Henri De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982) 67–84.

⁶¹ Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism* 51; Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* 110.

When incarnational ecclesiology misses the Spirit in the end times it does injustice to the eschatological theme of the kingdom of God. Spirit and kingdom are united as key biblical themes of the promised age to come,⁶² and just as Catholics and Orthodox subordinate the Spirit to the Church, so they subordinate the kingdom by equating it with the Church.⁶³ But the NT itself will tolerate no such overrealized eschatology in the subordination or equation of kingdom to Church. In Scripture, it is God's reign over his creation that envelopes all history and absorbs even the Church's history. That the Biblical testimony demands the release of eschatology from the confines of ecclesiology is a fact long recognized by Protestant exegetes,⁶⁴ and one recognized by certain Catholic ones. Rudolf Schnackenburg, for example, in his significant study of the kingdom of God summarizes the NT picture of Church and kingdom this way:

God's reign is not so associated with the Church that we can speak of it as a "present form of God's kingdom," since this would suppose an amalgamation with the Church's history on earth. God's reign as such has no organization and goes through no process; it does not embrace the just and sinners, it is in no sense dependent upon earthly and human factors. It is not "built up" by men and thus brought to its goal. Yet all this can be said of the Church in its mundane form. . . .⁶⁵

⁶² It is with the exercise of the Spirit's power over demons that Jesus can declare the presence of the Kingdom of God (Matt 12:28 par.; cf. Rom 14:17). For a discussion of the Spirit as the "already" of the Kingdom of God in this age, see Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* 329–335; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC; Waco, 1988) 822–823; G. Johnston, "The Kingdom of God' Sayings in Paul's Letters," in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare* (ed. P. Richardson and T. C. Hurd; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984) 153–155; David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 73; Frances Young, "Paul and the Kingdom of God," in *The Kingdom of God and Human Society* (ed. Robin S. Barbour; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993) 244–245.

⁶³ Limouris states, "The Church is a sacramental community. It exists as an objective, historical reality in the midst of the earth. It is one with the unity of God. It is holy with His holiness. It is catholic and boundless fullness of His divine being and life. It is apostolic with His own divine mission. It is eternal life, God's Kingdom on earth, salvation itself" (Limouris, "The Church as Mystery," citing T. Hopko, *All the Fullness of God* [New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1982] 36; cf. also Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* 265–280). Zizioulas similarly describes the Church's celebration of the Eucharist as when "the Kingdom in its entirety enters into history and is realized here and now" (John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* [Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1985] 155, cited in Volf, *After our Likeness* 100).

⁶⁴ In 1941 F. M. Braun noted the refusal to identify the Church and Kingdom as perhaps the most significant characteristic of Protestant ecclesiology. he attributes this to the recent focus of the scholarly discussion on eschatology where the Church was seen as a messianic community looking forward to the realization of God's universal rule. With the mission of the Church viewed in these terms, the Church was subordinated to the Kingdom contra the Catholic and Orthodox paradigm (F. M. Braun, *Aspects nouveaux du problème de L'Église* [Fribourg: Librairie de l'Université, 1941] 30–33, 161–170).

⁶⁵ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963) 233–234. See also Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967) 88–104. Several voices within the Catholic Church have called for the Kingdom to occupy a more central position.

Schnackenburg's perspective is correct, but so long as high ecclesiologies claim an incarnational presence in the world, the kingdom will remain the prisoner of the Church.⁶⁶

3. *Summary.* The office of king reveals both the inadequacies and the dangers of an incarnational theologizing in ecclesiology. The tendency toward identity of Christ and Church in this office minimizes the subjection of the Church to her Head. He alone is supreme Lord with all authority, and it is as obedient subject that she is supposed to carry out her Lord's wishes. The two acting subjects cannot be commingled into one as the Church's infidelity to her Head suggests. Furthermore, incarnational paradigms are dangerous as they inevitably produce a deficient pneumatology and doctrine of the kingdom. When ecclesiology is conditioned in terms of incarnation, the *prima facie* NT evidence for theo-, Christo-, and pneuma-centricity in the office of king becomes convoluted.

IV. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

When the *munus triplex* of Christ and the Church is played out against the NT, three implications emerge. First, incarnational categories lead to patently false conclusions for ecclesiology. What Neuhaus wants to unite into one subject in the *totus Christus*, the NT stubbornly keeps separate. Only God and Christ are the objects of saving faith, never the Church. Catholic and Orthodox assertions to the contrary betray an unwarranted theologizing via Chalcedon that has taken them far afield of the NT text itself. While the Chalcedonian ecclesiology is present in the traditions of the Church's fathers, the *earliest tradition* found in the NT itself does not appear to see the Church in those terms.⁶⁷ Similarly misleading in incarnational ecclesiology is the easy equation of the Church's mission with the mission of her Lord that is so prevalent in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Christ's messianic mission

See Karl Rahner, "The Church and the Parousia of Christ," *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969) 6:298; Richard P. McBrien, *Do We Need the Church?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 98; and Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968) 92–93.

⁶⁶ Congar makes clear how the Kingdom is subordinated to incarnational ecclesiology in Catholicism and Orthodoxy when he equates the Kingdom to the mystical body of Christ: "In the Synoptics this mystery [of the Church] is revealed in terms of the kingdom. In St. John the mystery is revealed in terms of life. In St. Paul the mystery is present as the new creation, the restoration of all things in Christ and ultimately as His mystical Body . . ." (Congar, "Church and Unity" 149).

⁶⁷ Schmidt notes that "high" ecclesiologies were not visible in the Church for centuries and that they germinated outside of the NT documents (K. L. Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," *TDNT* 3:532–536). Florovsky confirms this when he argues that Orthodox ecclesiology cannot be sustained upon the texts of Scripture alone. The patristic emphasis and development of the Church as Christ's body is the prism through which Paul's concept of the body must be interpreted (G. Florovsky, "Christ and His Church: Suggestions and Comments," in *l'Église et les Églises* II [Chevetogne, 1956] 166; cited by Lanne, "L'Église dans la Théologie Orthodoxe" 179). Florovsky's assertion makes clear that the final *Grunddifferenz* separating Protestants from Orthodox and Catholics is the authority of the tradition, i.e. How does the church remain itself through time? See the discussion in Jenson, *Unbaptized God* 108–110.

that founded, leads, and ultimately will bring his Church to glory radically qualifies the Great Commission of the Church. For, as one has noted, "Christ's mission was to *be* the messiah. The Church's mission is, by word and action, to point men to Him."⁶⁸ When put in this context, claims for the Church as the continuation of Christ's mission really demonstrate how "high" ecclesiology is *de facto* a startlingly "low" christology.

The second implication of the *munus triplex Christi* and the Church concerns the interpretation of the Church as Christ's body in 1 Cor 12:27 *et al.* As the logic of a realistic or ontological interpretation of the Body cannot be extended out and sustained by the offices of Christ and the Church, it suggests all the more a metaphorical intent in the apostle's usage. Significant corroborating exegetical observations here are:

1. *The variety of images for the Church.* Minear's cataloguing of more than eighty NT images of the Church places an *a priori* burden on anyone claiming that the body is the one image that is not metaphorical.⁶⁹ It also argues that the reality to which this great host of images all point is larger than what any one of them is capable of expressing.⁷⁰

2. *The variability of the image.* According to Paul's own use, the body image itself takes different forms further suggesting its metaphorical qualities. In Romans and Corinthians, a local fellowship of believers composes the entire body, but in Ephesians and Colossians, Christ as the head of the body universal is introduced.⁷¹

3. *The referent of the image.* The most direct Pauline referent for any connection of believers and Christ's "body" is the literal, physical body of Christ to which believers are united by means of the covenant (e.g. Rom 7:4; 1 Cor 11:27).⁷² Some sort of incorporative or representational understanding

⁶⁸ David Cairns, in a review of Best's *One Body in Christ* (*SJT* 8 [1955] 422).

⁶⁹ Minear, *Images of the Church* 268–269. This point is also underscored as the body image is closely connected with other clear metaphors (cf. the temple, 1 Cor 6:19). See Edmund P. Clowney, "Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church: A Hermeneutical Deepening of Ecclesiology," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization* (ed. D. A. Carson; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 77; and Minear, *Images of the Church* 221–249.

Gundry's point that "failure to use simile does not decide against the use of metaphor" is well taken. He adds that Paul does not say that believers are *like* wild olive branches, or plants or a building or a temple, or that he is *like* a mother in travail. Yet such expressions are taken by all as metaphorical (Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology* 234–235).

⁷⁰ Minear, *Images of the Church* 222–223; so also Söding, "Ihr aber seid der Leib Christi" 162. Literary criticism frequently addresses the mistaken notion of the *mere* metaphor. Metaphors by nature have the power to carry a "semantic surplus" implying that "the attempt to exhaust its meaning is doomed from the start" as Gundry says (*Sōma* 241). On the body of Christ as more than *mere* metaphor, but still not literal, see Andrew Perriman, "'His body, which is the church. . . .'" Coming to Terms with Metaphor," *EvQ* 62/2 (1990) 123–142; and Barbara Feld, "The Discourses Behind the Metaphor 'the Church is The Body of Christ' as Used by St. Paul and the 'Post-Paulines,'" *Asia Journal of Theology* 6 (1992) 123–142.

⁷¹ See the discussion in Moule, *The Origin of Christology* 74.

⁷² Clowney states that "the key to Paul's use of the metaphor 'body of Christ' lies in this representative principle as it is applied to the *literal* body of Christ" (Clowney, "Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church" 89).

similarly presents the condition of the Christian life: the Christian is in Christ; Christ is in the Christian.⁷⁸ This is the condition that provides for our basic communion with our Lord subject to subject. But this is and must be a perichoretic relationship, not an incarnational one. Christ's being in us does not make us identical with him any more than God's being in Christ makes Jesus the incarnation of the Father. At the *perichoretic* level there is an entirely different dynamic, one that denies identity but still affirms mysterious communion. Jesus the incarnate One did not have fellowship with the Logos; he *was* the Logos. He did have fellowship with the Father in a perichoretic fashion. This is why Paul illustrates Christ's relationship with his people by marriage, where two subjects commune as "one flesh" but still remain juxtaposed (Eph 5:30–32).⁷⁹ The result is a mysterious unity, but it is a unity with two subjects, not one. So also it is with the Church. United to her Lord, she is still separate from him.

Our study of the *munus triplex* of Christ and the Church reveals the inadequacy of the incarnational paradigm to characterize Christ's relationship with his Church and remain faithful to Scripture. The NT makes too great an effort to distinguish and separate the two to abide the facile affirmations of incarnational theologizing. In like fashion, the *munus triplex* of Christ and the Church also demonstrates the relative position ecclesiology occupies in salvation history. "High" ecclesiology inevitably means "low" Christology, pneumatology, and eschatology. As the meetings of evangelicals and Catholics and Orthodox no doubt will continue in the future, it is also clear that the course of dialogue must include not only matters of ecclesiology, but pneumatology, eschatology, and Christology as well.

⁷⁸ Thus, as Sartory reminds us, Christology must address at some level the "ontological structure of Christ" and not reduce Christ to just his office and work (Sartory, "Die Gefahr der Kategorie des 'Inkarnatorischen'" 65).

⁷⁹ "... because we are member of his body. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church." On this union, see Richard Batey, "The *MIA SAPH* Union of Christ and the Church," *NTS* 13 (1966–67) 270–281; Lincoln, *Ephesians* 380–381; J. Cambier, "Le grand mystère concernant le Christ et son Église," *Bib* 47 (1966) 84–89; and Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, 'One Flesh,'" *TrinJ* 12 NS (1991) 79–94. Ratzinger completely obscures the point of two subjects in the union when he cites Eph 5:30–32 to argue for unity alone. See the discussion in Volf, *After Our Likeness* 34. Jenson also misses the significance of the trinitarian dynamic for this point when he attempts to find identity and difference solely from the body image (Jenson, *Unbaptized God* 128).