

## Being temple: church-shaped mission from commodity to community

In the movie *Amazing Grace*, William Wilberforce, is considering taking up the cause of abolition of slavery and he is asked whether he will use his beautiful voice “to praise God or to change the world”. The movie clearly demonstrates that it’s possible to do both, but I think we need to be even clearer theologically on this matter.

### The false dichotomy

The false separation between worship and mission doesn’t just mean that it’s possible to do both worship and politics, but even more strongly, that it is impossible to do either of these things properly in isolation from the other.

Any kind of separation between the two can only be because one or other is distorted from its true source and character. The choice between worship or mission, church reform or mission, is a false option. If you think you are doing one without the other it is either not true worship/church or not true mission. The essence of church is missional *and* the essence of mission is ecclesial (churchly). Many current writers emphasise the former (because they want to free the church from its introverted addiction to institutions), but it is much less frequently expressed the other way. In what follows I will explore what it means to believe that the essence of God’s mission in the world is ecclesial.

The first objection to this thesis has to be straightforward “Tui” incredulity, “Yeah Right!” Not the church I know! It is easy to look at the church we know, see its distortions and end up justifiably disillusioned. We should not underestimate or move too quickly past this incredulity. It will require both diagnosis and prognoses. But at this

point we need to note how much easier it is to wash our hands of the church we know if we operate according to a dichotomy between worship and mission. There are all sorts of reasons people use to support such a dichotomy. For exam-

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ple, it is commonly claimed that Jesus was into kingdom, not church, so we should be too. The problem with this is that Jesus’ concept of kingdom is intimately bound up with the notion of the fulfilment of the people of God. You can’t even talk of kingdom (in Jesus terms) without assuming a social community of the people of God. It is socio-political language. Jesus gathered a group of twelve around him in a clear symbol of the fulfilment of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus may not have founded the church in any straightforward sense, but the fact is that church is the logical consequence of Jesus life, death and resurrection<sup>1</sup>. It is what the Spirit of Jesus does. Miroslav Volf and Maurice Lee capture the falseness of this dichotomy brilliantly when they write about the identity of the church:

*The frequently invoked tension between identity and mission is spurious for the simple reason that identity is mission; mission cannot acquire gain by identity’s suffering loss.*

*If mission is compromised by a concern for identity the problem is not that identity has been overemphasized, but that it has been wrongly conceived. The claim that the church’s identity is its first mission is valid only if mission is understood from the start as part of the church’s identity. The church emerged as a result of the mission of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit to announce and inaugurate the reign of God. Since the reign of God is unthinkable without the people of God, the church is not simply a means toward the reign of God, rather, the church is in some sense an end in itself. But it is an end only insofar as it is oriented toward and contributes to*

*the emergence of something greater than itself – the reign of God....In the power of the Spirit, the church must participate in this in-breaking of God’s favor – or cease to be the church.<sup>2</sup> [emphasis mine]*

It is my contention that rather than operating with this false dichotomy we should instead be radical about the reform of the church. One way of thinking about this radical reform is to explore the New Testament notion of being the temple – as it is applied to both Jesus and to the church. Perhaps we will also learn what it means in our time to cast money-changers out of the temple again?

### The temple in Jesus’ time

So what might the temple have meant for early Christianity? Tom Wright makes the point that first century Jews saw themselves as, in an important sense, still in exile.<sup>3</sup> They were occupied by a foreign force. The glory days of their faith were in the past. They were looking forward to the liberating messianic establishment of the rule of God

rather than that of Rome. In the meantime they were still in a kind of exile. There *was* a temple in Jesus time. In about 516bc the temple was reconstructed as the people of Judah returned to the land. In about 16BC Herod embarked on a massive development of this temple. For all its grandness and glory, Jews of Jesus' time saw it as a kind of "Claytons" temple.<sup>4</sup> As Herod's gift to the Jews it represented both Roman domination on the one hand, as well as their past and future hope on the other. It was an ambiguous sign – both of their identity and of their exile. It was a temple without a heart. Since the exile there was no longer an ark of the covenant and mercy seat in its holy of holies. Jesus was part of that whole public debate about the temple. His cleansing of the temple only makes sense in terms of that context. He was not so much an anti-temple person as a radical reformer of the temple and the economy of forgiveness that surrounded it. He reformed it in a way which rendered the physical building irrelevant, but which nevertheless brought to fulfilment what Israel was *doing right* in its worship and liturgy

### The atonement liturgy of the first temple

To capture something of what they were doing right I want to spell out something of what the ancient Jewish liturgy of the temple was as best we can reconstruct it from the predominantly post-exilic redaction of Israel's scriptures. I am relying here on the writing of James Alison<sup>5</sup>, and he in turn draws on Old Testament scholar Margaret Barker.<sup>6</sup>

The central liturgy of the old temple was that of the atonement. It begins with the high priest sacrificing a bull or a calf as a symbolic cleansing of his own sins and taking on a new role. He then puts on a shining white robe, which was basically an "angel costume". He is now no longer a human being but

has become the angel, one of whose names was "the Son of God". This meant that he could put on "the Name", meaning "the name which could not be pronounced", (not Voldemort but) "the Name of the Lord", aka YHWH. With the Name contained in the phylacteries either on his forehead or wrapped around his arms, he was qualified to go into the Holy of Holies to be "Yahweh-for-the-day, an angelic emanation of God most high". (Remember, "Blessed is he who comes in the

*proper flow*."<sup>8</sup>

The Temple Veil (that the priest came through) was made of very rich material and represented the material world, that which was created. At this point the high priest would don a robe made of the same material as the Veil, to demonstrate that what he was acting out was God coming forth and entering into the world of creation so as to make atonement (restoring creation and forgiving sins both implied in the liturgy). The liturgy is completed when the priest goes out and sprinkles the outer temple and then symbolically places the sins of the people on the head of the remaining goat (or sheep), which is then chased out and driven over a cliff to its death.

Now, there are all sorts of things one could conclude from that, but the interesting point here is that "for the Temple understanding the high priest at this stage *was* acting in the person of Yahweh",<sup>9</sup> and it was *the Lord's* (goat #1) blood that was being sprinkled. This

was a divine movement to set people free. It was not, as we so often imagine, a priest satisfying a divinity. The reason why the priest had to engage in a prior expiation was because he was about to become a sign of something quite else: acting outwards. "The movement is not inwards towards the Holy of Holies; the movement is outwards from the Holy of Holies."<sup>10</sup> It is not so much about us approaching the presence of God (or the priest doing it on our behalf) as about God approaching us and our world.

The temple was an enactment and icon of the outwardly moving God! So this whole ritual of atonement is the opposite of what we think of the priestly rite. Alison says we tend to have an "Aztec imagination" as regarding the sacrificial system. The hallmark of the sacrificial system is that its priest sacrifices something so as to placate some deity. In the temple liturgy, Jewish

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name of the Lord" at Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem).

Dressed for the occasion, he is then provided with either two lambs or goats and chooses, by lot, one of them. The one he chooses becomes "the Lord" and the other becomes Azazel (a kind of devil figure). He then takes "The Lord" into the Holy of Holies, kills it, and sprinkles the Mercy Seat (the throne above which were the Cherubim) and the Ark with its blood, purifying it of any impurities that may have accrued in the mean time. Thus the scene is set.

The Holy of Holies, according to Alison, now represents the dwelling of the creator. This means that Creation started from the Temple Veil outwards, while the Holy Place was beyond time, matter, and space. And so it is YHWH who emerges from the Holy of Holies dressed in white in order to forgive the people their sins and to give *creation its*

faith has stepped beyond pagan religion. And the point is simply that rather than us sacrificing victims (whether it be human or animal, or crop) it is actually *God* who is doing the work. *God* comes out of eternity (from before time, before “the first day”) wanting to restore creation, out of his love for his people.

If this reconstruction of the temple liturgy is correct, then the temple was more than just a building, more than just a symbol of institutionalisation, it was the locus the enactment of *God’s* grace – of the love that drives creation, but also of the love that we need to be recipients of, before we can be in any sense agents. For first century Jews, the temple, for all its “Clayton’s” character, is (to use an overused term) an icon of their identity. It captures their faith’s revolutionary move beyond pagan sacrificial religion.

### **The first temple as background to Christian understanding of Jesus**

Margaret Barker argues that in spite of the radical post-exilic reforms this liturgy continued to inform the hopes and expectations of those who followed Jesus. In what follows I will summarise some points indicating the way Jesus was understood as fulfilling the temple.

As we mentioned earlier, the anthem of the crowd as Jesus entered Jerusalem is recorded by John as “blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord” (Jn 12:13), a clear reference from the Psalms to the priest of the atonement liturgy. It’s also worth remembering that much earlier in John’s gospel where Jesus says “if you destroy the temple I will raise it again in three days” (Jn 2:19), the writer interprets this comment as a saying about his body as temple. In Luke chapter 4, when Jesus announces his agenda in the Synagogue (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me etc”) he uses the Jubilee announcement which in Jewish expectation of the first century BC was something associ-

ated with Melchizedek – the high priest who would return to liberate the people.<sup>11</sup> John’s Gospel makes these expectations most obvious when Jesus bases his final speech to his disciples on the High Priest’s atonement prayer.<sup>12</sup> Significantly in John’s Gospel Jesus is crucified on a Thursday (rather than the Friday) at three in the afternoon which was exactly the time when the high priest would be killing lambs for the Passover feast. So as John sees it, just when the ordinary lambs are being slaughtered the “lamb of

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God” is on his way to his place of execution, wearing, interestingly, a seamless robe, a priest’s robe. So in John’s interpretation of Jesus we have the true priest going as the lamb to execution. Notice also the tradition that “not one bone of his body was broken” (Jn 19:36) – a suggestion of the unblemished lamb.

Another indication that all this was in the minds of those first Christians is that on the first day of the week we find ourselves back “in the garden” (reminiscent of the garden of creation). The first thing that Mary sees when she enters the tomb is two angels. Where were they sitting? One at the head and the other at the foot. This is the holy of holies with its cherubim – and now it is an open place; the stone is rolled away and it is opened to the world – eternity is opened to the world for the healing of creation (i.e. everything outside the Holy of Holies).

James Alison makes the point that all this goes to demonstrate

that when we talk of Christ as fulfilling the temple we are not talking about some random follow-up of an ancient obscure prophecy whose significance is largely lost, nor is it the abolition of something bad. Rather, the fulfilment of “something good which wasn’t good enough.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Jesus’ sacrifice and Girard’s reading of it**

So what did Jesus think he was doing with something good that wasn’t good enough? How did he understand himself as fulfilling the temple? My short answer to this enormous question is that Jesus enacted this priestly liturgy in real life. As Alison puts it, the genius of Jesus is that he “brings together the liturgical and the ethical”<sup>14</sup> – or even more profoundly, he links the liturgy of *God’s* grace with the human condition. He makes a link in his own body between the priestly “lamb of *God*” from Israel’s faith (this bread is my broken body) and the sacrificial realities

that underlie human society. He didn’t sacrifice himself by committing suicide, which would do nothing for the world leaving it untouched. He gave himself (like the *God* of the temple liturgy, but this time it was not liturgical drama) into a world of violent sacrificial victimisation which has been at the centre of human society “since the foundation of the world” (to use a phrase from Jesus – Mt, 25:34; Lk 11:50; Jn 17:24). In him the emerging Hebrew understanding of *God* meets the “Aztec imagination”. The world of the Hebrew temple meets the ethical and social world of fallen humanity.

This is unpacked for me most clearly by the French theologian, René Girard.<sup>15</sup> Girard reminds us that although we Christians see the passion as a unique event in worldly history, and in a sense it is indeed unique as revelation, as a violent event it is not; it fits perfectly within the practices of victimisation. It is unique as the divine unveiling of

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what is very un-unique and universal – the human practices of building society around victimisation – or more specifically what he calls the single victim mechanism.

Girard began academic life as a literary theorist and then as an anthropologist. As an anthropologist he tries to account for the ubiquity of sacrifice in the ancient world. His background in the study of human desire in literature led him to the conclusion that sacrifice is everywhere *because it works*. How is that so? Girard suggests that as humans emerged from other primates with increased mental plasticity and power their power of mimesis (imitating each other) meant that they not only learnt by imitating physical behaviour but also the desires of those around them (biblically speaking – our “neighbours”). This increase in mimetic powers means that we become rivals with our neighbours for the common objects of desire. The resulting acceleration of rivalry through imitation of desire would make society impossible. Girard posits that the solution to the instability is found in moments of “sacrificial crisis” where someone is accused and made the scapegoat for the group’s problems. The gesture of accusation is imitated and the group is united in lynching its scapegoat. The newfound unanimity of hatred produces an awe-inspiring peace. Thus the sacrifice of the scapegoat is the foundation of both society and religion. Violence is cast out by violence at least for a while. A classic example of the effectiveness of this mechanism is found in ancient Greece where they kept a whole group of people called *pharmacos* (from which we get pharmacy, which incidentally means both poison and remedy) precisely for the purpose of providing sacrificial victims at times of crisis.

For Girard, the raising by God of the crucified Jesus, and the witness of the scripture to that, is the unveiling and disempowering of the single victim mechanism. What is made possible is a new community and a new social stability united in imitation of the self-giving Jesus – an embodiment of what Jesus might

have called the kingdom of God. Girard’s theory is certainly “intellectual” and has been criticised or at least suspected of providing a kind of philosophical procrustean bed for theology.<sup>16</sup> However, we ought not to jump to such a conclusion prematurely. For Girard the knowledge made available by the Spirit in the community of the risen victim is not theoretical in the abstract, but unsettling (mortifying!) self-knowledge that addresses us at the psycho-social roots of our identity. In the community of the risen-victim we find ourselves not merely told something but forgiven by God our victim.

What is exciting about this is that when we appreciate this link between the dynamics of human nature (the ethical) and God’s salvation, we realise that the question of our propensity for violence is at the heart of the Christian gospel. Salvation begins to make sense! We don’t understand the gospel until we understand something of this link. So the new temple we embody is not just about a liturgical drama in the heavenlies. It’s about a self-giving of God that touches earth. It is certainly not a transaction in the heavenlies where God is being appeased and some divine deal is being done (as some theories of atonement suggest). If there is an angry deity that needs appeasing in Christ’s enacted liturgy as “Son of God”, as priest who substitutes himself for the lamb, that angry deity is us.

### **The Church as temple**

In 1 Corinthians 3: 16-17, when engaging the divisions of the Corinthian church and talking about its true foundation on Christ, Paul concludes his building metaphor with not just any old building but says “do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy and you are that temple”. Paul is not talking about your physical body; this is not a justification for not smoking. You, *plural*, are that temple. The context is an argument

about division in the church. It’s about the place where the Spirit dwells in order to demonstrate the grace of God (as the liturgy of the atonement did, as Jesus did) and that place is a community that must not be destroyed at all costs.

In Ephesians 2: 19-22 Paul is talking about the work of Christ creating a new humanity by breaking down the hostility that divides, Jew from Gentile, insiders from outsiders. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints, and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” The temple we are is a community of atonement (at-one-ment). Here again the ethical and liturgical have come together, not just in Jesus’ death, but in the life it creates. It’s not entirely clear what Paul might be meaning here, thanks to mixed metaphors. But one way of looking at it is to say that the drama of God’s mission to the world, that drama first encapsulated in the ancient liturgy of the first temple, taken up by Jesus in his death, vindicated by the Father in his resurrection, is now made available in all its ethical and anthropological concreteness in a new form of community, the body of Christ.

What is a body? Robert Jenson suggests that a body is a person’s availability to others, “however this occurs”.<sup>17</sup> However embodiment may occur in the age to come, in this age a person’s embodiment (availability to others) is organic. As far as the body of Christ is concerned, Jenson goes on to suggest that the church is the availability in this age of the risen and crucified Jesus to the world. In the light of our previous discussion, we might add that *as the temple* being shaped and reformed by the spirit, we are the locus of the availability of the life of Jesus to the world. Thus, to be the temple is to participate in the ecclesial mission of God to the world.

### **Worship builds body (politic)**

What is the link between Christ's fulfilment of the temple, and us becoming the temple? I want to suggest that it is *worship*. We become the temple as we are the recipients of Christ as "new temple", and worship is that interface of reception. To understand this we need to be clear about the central character of true worship.

Imagine for a moment that you are

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driving into a small town in New Zealand and haven't quite slowed down to 50 kph when out in front of you runs a four year old girl and she is instantly killed. Now imagine a meeting two weeks later arranged by the mother between herself and you. She has come to forgive you – to give you your life back. That's worship – a metaphor for Eucharistic Christian worship. James Alison calls it "Undergoing God" – being regularly addressed by our forgiving victim.<sup>18</sup> Such worship breaks down the walls of division between those who would otherwise be building up their identity over against others. Worship builds body and so, as Bernd Wannewetsch says, worship is inherently political.<sup>19</sup> Worship is political already. Let me spell this out a little.

Worship is not something we do for God. Worship is not a kind of generosity on our part in which we flatter God's ego. God doesn't need us to worship. We need to worship God. God graciously gives us worship so that we will be changed in our life and identity together. Let me be clear. Worship is not something we do *for God*. Some people over-react and say worship is not something we do [full stop]. We do, in fact, do worship. However, we worship because it is given to us to

worship, for our benefit. We worship because the Spirit moves us. We worship because we are given a set of practices which together constitute worship (eucharist, baptism, confession, for example). We respond within a set of practices that we are given. It may be self-expression in a sense, but it is not self-originating or self-centred self-expression (like some people think art is). It is participation in a

set of responsive practices. And in all of this givenness we are the primary beneficiaries of worship (the world is next in line to benefit). Worship forms our personal identity and

being (We imitate whom we adore – Augustine<sup>20</sup>). In adoring we become caught up in God and become God-like (anyone tempted to a Tui moment here?). This is not an isolated individualised thing. Worship forms church (like being encountered by the woman whose daughter is run over forms us).

We often think of it in terms of the Wilberforce challenge – I will do worship (praise God with my voice) and then I will do politics (change the world). Worship is political *already* because as the place of undergoing God it creates a kind of city (*polis*) which is a community or society in the image of God. If worship is true, well maintained, (and of course that's an enormous "if") then it will form a community that participates in the mission of God in the world. Maintenance (in the sense of maintaining proper worship) is missional.

Alison makes the point that such worship is liturgy rather than theory – a theory is something you can carry around and have control of. Worship is much more holistic than that and much more out of our control.<sup>21</sup> In worship we are ad-

dressed in our need and undergo God in ways that change us, so that we, not just individually but also communally and socially, can share in God's engagement with the world.

### **The commodification of worship**

All this leads me back to the diagnoses I promised at the beginning and those recurring "Tui moments" in all of this. Why does the worship we know seem so often like a temporary distraction, a form of entertainment? What is our diagnosis?

It seems to me that if my arguments above have been correct then the ultimate work of the devil in our time must be the commodification of worship. It may be that the commodification of everything is the work of the devil, creating a certain kind of human-being as consumer. But if, as I believe, the solution to our problem has something to do with worshipping com-

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munities in which people undergo God, then the *ultimate* work of the devil has got to be the commodification (not of everything, but specifically) of worship, and in turn the commodification of community/church. Both church and worship have been conformed to the world of the consumer market. The money changers have defined the temple. We consume Christ rather than undergo him.

It's not a new idea to say that worship becomes commodified in a market-dominated world. However the seriousness of this becomes clear only when we understand it in the light of the political nature of worship. To commodify worship is to undermine the authenticity of the church's identity and thus to subvert the mission of God. When

worship becomes a commodity, our world-formed identity (formed by the dominant institutions of the wider public life) fits worship into its own framework, subverting its claim on our character and life. Worship is no longer permitted to do its political work; it is tamed. Consumers attend church for its product value – as therapy or ecstasy. We attend church rather than be church.

In my experience we give this away all the time when we talk of ourselves as receiving something from the church as provider. We shop around for a church to suit us. We treat the hymns as commodities (giving their assessment at the door).

We treat the minister as a commodity (I love it when you wear those robes, thank you so much for visiting). Why, for instance when we know theoretically that the church is people, do we continue to talk of going to church – referring either to gathered worship or the building? The subconscious reasons are philosophical. We are closer to Margaret Thatcher than we like to admit. She famously said: “There is no such thing as society: there are individual men and women, and there are families.”<sup>22</sup> Margaret Thatcher intended it as a kind of philosophical basis for minimising the role of the state. But it is equally effective as a rejection of the church – the minimalisation of church as a support group for individuals and families. Such tacit assumptions will constantly subvert the political impact of worship.

In this climate anxious worship leaders, struggling to make a living in the religious marketplace, provide the excitement (or therapy) needed to escape from the exigencies of the weekday consumer experience. Thus rather than Sabbath providing the defining shape of our life, it merely reinforces (as entertainment) other forces shaping our life. And then church leaders in general buy into this. So the more we struggle with the decline of the church the more we are tempted to

market ourselves better and desperately search for the latest strategy for growth. There is an enormous industry in church growth out there and new programs come out from the United States regularly and everyone is desperate to keep up with the latest. Some churches work very hard to have the latest music, the loudest band, the best car-parking.

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The recent publication of an encyclopaedia of church marketing is a sobering sign.<sup>23</sup>

It seems to me that the annual sermon about the Church being like a body with many gifts – trotted out each year – will do nothing to change anything. Why? Because it too easily is absorbed into our way of treating worship as provider of “theory”. The annual sermon becomes another theory. Why is it ineffective? Apart from the common theological failure to appreciate the eucharistic centre to worship, I think it is because the structures, institutions, and habits of life that we currently operate in are insufficiently eucharistic in form. They provide theory – albeit theory for practical living in a consumer society – rather than an occasion for growing community together. And when we don’t structure our lives for community (and build face-to-face relationality into our worship and life together), other institutions (e.g. the market) end up controlling our minds. The supermarket and the shopping mall effectively become our real worship, because they structure our minds as consumers.

To escape the commodification of worship we need to develop practices which centralise rather than marginalise worship. One way in which worship is centralised in

the body of Christ is if it is linked to structures which support relational life. Too often we demonstrate in our practices a strange contradiction. We claim to be the embodiment of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the Trinity and what do we do? We come together once a week to sit passively receiving something which we may or may not regard as a communication from God and then we stop and have a brief chat with our friends, usually carefully excluding matters of faith and life. We structure ourselves for privacy. “It’s my private faith, my private relationship with God.” So we end up reflecting the wider world rather than the kingdom of God.

### **Worship based social trinitarianism**

What is being advocated here is clearly social trinitarianism (*mea culpa!*). Not because, like Leonardo Boff and sometimes Jurgen Moltmann,<sup>24</sup> we treat the trinity as a kind of model or theory of social order and are optimistic that we can reorder our society in egalitarian ways in the image of the trinity. Rather because, like Miroslav Volf,<sup>25</sup> Colin Gunton, Robert Jenson and others, we believe that as we undergo God and are formed in the image of Christ our social life will look more like the life of the trinity (*imago trinitatis*). If God *is* love, this has structural implications, not just emotional implications, for us who participate in God’s mission. Being saved by the cross of Christ makes us profoundly pessimistic about human social order and much more aware of our need for the kind of worship described above. In the midst of such pessimism we cling to the cross of Christ and claim to be called to be an embodiment of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the Trinity as an alternative to the world for the sake of the world

### **A call to reform**

It is easy to react to a dysfunctional

church, as if we could participate in God's mission in some non-ecclesial way, freed from the social life of the body of Christ and its worship and institutions. This is a mistake. I want to conclude with two theses to nail to church doors (nails not provided).

There is no point bringing people in the door if we are not an embodiment of the Kingdom of God and the life of the Trinity as an alternative to the world, for the sake of the world.

There is also no point in going out into the world with a theoretical gospel (in the sense I defined before) because acts of service (let's call it social service) supported only by a theoretical gospel end up merely helping people to survive in the currently existing social order of the world.

## Endnotes

1 Miroslav Volf and Maurice Lee, "The Spirit and the Church", in *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, Bradford E Hinze and D Lyle Dabney (eds) (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), 385-7. "Contemporary scholarship seems agreed that "ecclesiological" passages in the Gospels, such as Matt 16:18, do not go back to Jesus himself. Jesus did not 'found' the church. Does it therefore follow as some scholars have argued, that the emergence of the church has nothing or very little to do with the original mission of Jesus, or even that Jesus eschatological self-understanding is incompatible with the idea of the church? Gerhard Lohfink has appropriately suggested that behind the disjunction between the mission of Jesus and the emergence of the church lies a dichotomy between the reign of God and the people of God. The dichotomy is false, however, because the reign of God is unthinkable without the people of God among whom it becomes a concrete reality. In Jesus ministry the indissoluble bond between the reign of God and the people of God is most clearly manifest in the calling of the Twelve, who symbolized and enacted 'the incipient gathering of Israel to be the eschatological people of the twelve tribes' Rather than being an alternative to the people of God, the reign of God is the coming and final presence of God with God's people, the reconstitution of the people as unfor-sakably God..." Volf and Lee, 386 referring to the work of Gerhard Lohfink, *Wie had Jesus Gemeinde gewollt? Zu gesellschaftlichen Dimension des christlichen Glaubens* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 38-41 and "Jesus und die Kirche," in *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie*, vol. 3, *Traktat Kirche*, Wl Kern, H.J. Pottmeyer, and M. Seckler (eds) (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 49-50.

2. Volf and Lee, 399.

3. N.T. Wright, *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 73. .

4. A non-alcoholic drink advertised as being the "drink you have when you're not having a drink." See <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Clayton's> [Accessed 27 June 2009].

5. James Alison, "An atonement update", Australian EJournal of Theology (October, 2006). See [http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt\\_8/alison.htm](http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_8/alison.htm) [Accessed 27 June 2009].

6. Margaret Barker's arguments and research are most easy accessed in the following series of academic articles (also available online from her website [www.margaretbarker.com](http://www.margaretbarker.com) [Accessed 1 July 2009]): "The Time is Fulfilled: Jesus and the Jubilee", in *SJT* 53/1 (2000): 22-32; "Atonement: The Rite of Healing", in *SJT* 49/1 (1996), available at the above website; "The Temple Roots of the Liturgy in Sourozh. A Journal of Orthodox Life and Thought 83 (March 2001): 1ff (available at the above website).

7. See Alison.

8. The restoration of creation is linked with the notion of Jubilee.

9. See Alison, "An atonement update".

10. See Alison, "An atonement update".

11. Margaret Barker writes in "The Time is Fulfilled: Jesus and the Jubilee", *SJT* 53/1 (2000): 22-32:

"The seventy weeks of years, 490 years, were ten Jubilees, and the alternative way of reckoning this period was as ten Jubilees. Jewish tradition remembered that the 490 years ended in 68CE; calculation from the second temple Jubilee sequence beginning in 424BCE gives 66CE. A two year discrepancy is hardly significant in the light of what this implies, namely that the tenth Jubilee began in 17/19 CE. In other words, tenth Jubilee fervour and expectations were the context for the ministry of Jesus."

"The Qumran Melchizedek text (11QMelch), written in the middle of the first century BCE but not necessarily composed at that time, describes the events of the tenth Jubilee<sup>14</sup>. Only fragments have survived so it is possible that the complete text described the other nine Jubilees also. The text begins by quoting the Jubilee laws in Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15, interpreting them 'for the last days'. The captives who are to return are people whose teachers have been 'hidden and kept secret' and these 'people of the inheritance of Melchizedek' will return. There is insufficient text for certainty, but this looks like a group who have been secretly preserving the teachings of the first temple, when there was a Melchizedek priesthood. In the tenth Jubilee they would 'return', perhaps to the temple as priests? The liberty of the Jubilee is interpreted as release from iniquities, the beginning of the atonement which will occur on the Day of Atonement at the end of the tenth Jubilee. The return and the release from iniquity were to happen in the first week, the first seven

years, of the tenth Jubilee i.e. approximately 19-26 CE. If Jesus was born in 7/6 BCE<sup>15</sup> and was baptised when he was about thirty years old (Luke 3.23), he began his ministry during the crucial first 'week' of the tenth Jubilee."

12. For an extensive account of John's understand of Jesus as the fulfilment of the temple see Alan R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*, *JSNTS* 220 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

13. See Alison, "An atonement update".

14. See Alison, "An atonement update".

15. See René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978) and *I See Satan Fall like Lightning* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

16. See for example Lucien Scubla "The Christianity of René Girard and the Nature of Religion" in Paul Demouche (ed.), *Violence and Truth* (London: Athlone, 1988), 160-78.

17. Robert Jenson, "Anima Ecclesiastica" in *God and Human Dignity*, R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead (eds) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 65.

18. See his book by this title. James Alison, *Undergoing God: Dispatches from the Scene of a Break-in* (Darton: Longman and Todd, 2006).

19. See Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship: Ethics for Christian Citizens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

20. Augustine of Hippo *De Civitate Dei*, Book 8, c17.

21. Alison, *Undergoing God*, 2-4.

22. Interview with Margaret Thatcher's in *Women's Own* (October 31, 1987).

23. *Concise Encyclopedia of Church and Religious Organisation Marketing*, Stevens, Loudon, Wren and Cole (eds) (New York, NY: Haworth Press, 2006 ) Significantly a review of literature in this publication shows a clear in the literature between theologians who reject marketing as not just a practice but a philosophy, and marketers who promote marketing as a tool for religion

24. Nigel Wright, *Disavowing Constantine: mission, church and the social order in the theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jürgen Moltmann* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006), 168-9 offers an interesting assessment of some weaknesses in Moltmann's social trinitarianism.

25. Volf and Lee, 398. "In the power of the Spirit which rested upon Jesus as he announced and enacted the reign of God and which the resurrection and exalted Christ poured out on his followers so that they can continue his mission in the world, churches live as catholic communities of equal persons who give allegiance to Jesus Christ and seek to embody divine love. As such communities, churches image in a broken way the Trinitarian life of God". [emphasis mine]



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