



Reformation
& **REVIVAL**
JOURNAL

A Quarterly for Church Renewal

VOLUME 14 · NUMBER 2 · 2005

*Why in the World Is the Church
in the First Place?*



Robert T. Henderson

*I*t is sometimes worth pondering how much we *assume* so many things that pertain to our life in Christ, and our life in the church, without ever examining the substance and validity of those assumptions. We are good at tossing about in *faux*-sophistication such descriptions of our current cultural scene as post-Christian, postmodern, post-Christendom, post-denominational, and post-everything imaginable. All may have some degree of validity, but, at the same time, they contain assumptions and a certain frame of reference that may actually be comprehended by only a very small minority of the larger Christian community. This is a professional liability, especially among those of us who are pastors and theologians, alas.

An episode out of my own life story is a humorous illustration of this. Early on in my career I was a young theological student, full of myself and recently back from a year of specialized study in another city. I had done a graduate level course during that year in the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith. I had been asked upon my return to assume the position of a congregation's minister to university students. So I thought it would be just outstanding if I enlightened these adolescent aborigines from the local universities with the theology of the Westminster divines. Sounded like a good idea. So I launched out for a couple of Sundays,

convinced of my remarkable contribution to their edification. But then came the reality check. On about the third Sunday, three of the guys wandered up to me after the class, grinned at me and said: "Bob, we don't know what in the hell you're talking about."

I loved it. I have never forgotten it. I had assumed that they wanted to know more than they did, or were interested in things that I was interested in, or had a frame of reference that I did. But they didn't. I still remember that frequently, now almost fifty years later, as I sit weekly with persons half my age as the "old guy" mentor and "wisdom figure." I am amazed at where their blank spots are and where their questions and hungerings are. I have discovered that these persons of above-average intelligence (even genius) simply don't relate to so much of the ecclesiastical tradition and the "stuff" with which we clergy get so obsessed. That's what I mean when I refer to the unwarranted assumptions that float around in our clergy-seminary subcultures.

It came home to me even more poignantly one day recently in a different setting. I was having coffee with a dear friend who happens to be an exceptionally gifted theologian and seminary professor. At one point, after pondering in silence for a few moments, he said rather wistfully: "I sometimes wonder if anything we're doing here [in the seminary] has anything to do with the kingdom of God." Or another time I was reminded of how captive many of us are to the assumptions and limitations of our "clergy-seminary subculture" when a friend, who is a brilliant physicist and world authority on laser technology as well as a major advocate of the ministry of the laity in the workplace, told me that the large and prominent church of which he was a member was "totally irrelevant" to his life. He explained that the assumption of that church seemed to be that he had nothing more important to do than to attend endless meetings and classes that had no particular significant purpose that he could relate to in his life of discipleship or to his calling to ministry within his professional career.

Now that I again sit in the pew and am no longer the

pastoral leader of a congregation, I get frequent inquiries from my laity friends about the viability or necessity of church forms such as denominations or seminaries or presbyteries or councils of churches. Part of this is pragmatism: What good is it? What do we get for our money? But more of it reflects to me the reality of our "clergy captivity" to the assumptions we unconsciously hold that such "irrelevant" things are somehow *sine qua non* parts of our life and purpose as church.

What I want to deal with here is a much more basic question. I want to ask: *Why* is the church? *What* is its essence, and *how* is it part of the design of God? *How* is it part of the gospel of God or the mission of God? And please note: we are not going to have the luxury of avoiding those probing questions for much longer. There is an emerging generation of younger adults who are insistent on pressing for meaningful answers. It is a generation that is a wonderful mixture of ruthless questioning into the *why?* and the *so what?* It is a generation that has a curiosity and a fascination about what is behind all of the church's forms and traditions, and why they were so important to past generations. It also is one that has the imagination to think in new and fresh categories. But remember, all of this is taking place in a generational culture that is also somewhat oblivious to its own roots and connections with the past.

The implications inherent in such an inquiry are far too extensive to be dealt with in a single journal article, but maybe I can at least kick open some doors and initiate some fruitful conversation that will be constructive in forming the next generation.

Take denominations for instance. A couple generations ago, when denominations may well have been at their "high-water mark," H. Richard Niebuhr is reputed to have said: "Denominations represent the moral failure of Christianity."¹ With the emerging generation denominations are not a "moral failure," they are simply a non-factor, or perhaps even a stumbling block (but, then, so are church institutions to them). Post-denominationalism is unquestionably upon us.

But it is simply too facile for us to deny the existence of denominations or of their continued presence with us. They will continue in some form, even if for no other reason than that their huge institutional investments guarantee it, even though they may have wandered far afield from their original purpose.

The inquiring outsiders (or outside inquirers?) of this present generation seldom approach a local church because of its denominational affiliation, because that is meaningless to them. They are much more likely to investigate a local church because they have heard rumors that it has provided authentic life and light or a meaningful contribution to some of their friends. Even when they choose to affiliate with a particular congregation they are not at all provincial about seeking out resources elsewhere in one or more other traditions all at the same time.

Most of our major Christian traditions were initiated with good purpose to accomplish ordered life or theological integrity or missional faithfulness. Admittedly, some were founded out of obstreperousness or a schismatic spirit or some other questionable cause. But all traditions have a way, in time, of losing touch with their founding purpose. Roman Catholic cultural anthropologist-author Gerald Arbuckle has written an illuminating treatise on this phenomenon in *Refounding the Church and Out of Chaos* (Orbis Press). His studies pertained primarily to the reasons behind the decline of the Maryknoll Order of the Roman Catholic Church, but his findings are quite applicable to our denominational traditions as well. He concluded that whenever any *order* (translate: denomination or tradition) *forgets, displaces, or dilutes* what he terms as its "founding myth" (its original reason for being and its original belief system), then that *order* reverts to *chaos*.

Such a conclusion seems abundantly evident as we observe many, if not most, of the so-called "mainline Protestant" denominations. I am part of the Reformed tradition. But what I have discovered is that Reformed Christians have little knowledge of their own founding genius or purpose. Likewise,

Methodists have long since become unfamiliar with the genius of John Wesley and the reasons for the vigor of the Wesleyan movement in its origins. Many Episcopalians seem to have forgotten altogether too much and are now in a crisis mode. Rich traditions have devolved into mere "denominational franchises" without much that is reminiscent of their origins. In my own Presbyterian Church it is alarming to me just how many of our ordained leaders have no idea what is contained in the foundational articles stated eloquently in our own *Book of Order* about the very reasons for the existence of the Presbyterian Church. To an even lesser degree have they any idea of the rich theological heritage contained in its *Book of Confessions*.

But let's go back to my questions about the *why* of the church. What did the Father-God have in mind for the church? What was Jesus' own vision when he declared, "I will build my church"? If we were able to come up with some convincing answers to that kind of questioning, then we just might be able to sort out all the ecclesiastical paraphernalia, the church institutions, the traditions, the church councils, and so forth, and come up with what might be currently present that is in some degree authentic and in harmony with that divine intent for the church. Sound reasonable?

Mindless *assumptions*, however, can short-circuit such a quest. For instance, take our motto within the Reformed tradition: *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda secundum verbum dei* (the church reformed and ever reforming according to the word of God). Such a venerable motto *assumes* that one understands, *a priori*, what and why that selfsame *ecclesia* even is, and what the purpose of the "ever reforming" disciplines might include in accomplishing whatever was the divine intent in the first place. In other words, there are a lot of assumptions that need examining.

If we fail to articulate the assumptions behind the motto, then it remains nothing more than an empty and sterile tradition and theory without any practical effect (purposefulness and fruitfulness) in the lives of those who make up the *ecclesia* in whatever particular place and time they may find

themselves. If we were to take that motto seriously, we would be doing some of the basic research necessary in finding answers to the questions (as in my professor friend's lament) about what any of this has to do with the kingdom of God. What does it have to do with God's new creation in Christ, with the gospel of Jesus? If we were to do that, then we might be in a better position to give some convincing response to the curiosity and ruthless questioning of my Millennial and GenX friends.

Such a process, however, might be too painful for those who are idolatrous about their comfort-zone theology and ecclesiology. It would require looking at the church with fresh eyes and at the frequently constricting theological assumptions of traditional ecclesiology such as sacralized places (sanctuaries), sacralized persons (clergy), sacraments, ordination, and liturgical forms as but a few possible starting places.² We would have to confess that we have become more than a little idolatrous about many of these assumed forms and traditions.

Or it is possible that were you to find yourself in some particular Christian congregation which was growing in depth and numbers and true worship, and were you to begin asking the questions about their denominational connections, or how their pastors were ordained . . . well, guess what? You might get the same answer that I received recently from a GenX disciple: "Denominations and clergy are so 'yesterday.'" I can almost feel some of my "traditional clergy" friends cringe at such a statement. But I have been in touch with a remarkable and profoundly substantive church with a large pastoral staff of persons with proven gifts only *one* of whom has a theological degree. The church has no denominational tie. And do you know what? They have asked the questions and examined the assumptions!

But could those GenXers be right about clergy and denominations being "so yesterday"? I must admit to getting a bit uneasy myself around the designation of church leaders as "ordained ministers of the Word and sacrament." Question: Where in scripture does that designation come from? Answer:

It doesn't. Question: How does it fit into the true essence of the church and its mission? Answer: It may not. Biblically, the only clear definition of the pastor-teacher role is found in Ephesians 4 where it is stated in terms of a particular *gift* of pastor-teacher. Its stated purpose is to enable and equip all of God's people for their work of ministry in order to bring them to maturity in Christ. It is Christ's provision for his people to see them beyond their vulnerability to every wind of teaching and all of the cultural *zeitgeists*, and so to grow into mature ministers in the context of their daily realities.³

Question: How many "ministers of Word and sacrament" see themselves in this critical function? Answer: *far too few*. Or how many have in view Paul's reproductive principle conveyed to Timothy, namely, to communicate what he had learned (from Paul) to other faithful and reliable persons so that they also will, in turn, be qualified to equip and teach others?⁴ Sounds pretty basic. Should the *true role of the pastor-teacher* be a part of our "reformed and ever being reformed" process?

What would it look like if there were pastor-teachers who not only established God's people in biblical and Christian orthodoxy, but also modeled for them what mature new creation lives look like in flesh and blood daily living? What if it included both the *formation* and the *modeling* in God's design for human community in the Spirit? People do need models, you know. They need disciple makers who will be demonstrations of how it all works out. Again, that can't be accomplished in large impersonal assemblies. The pastor-teacher ministry has to be with specific others as a disciple maker in the context of new creation community.

So back to my questions: Why is the church? What is its essence in the mind and purpose of God? How is it part of our gospel of Jesus Christ, or of the *missio dei*? Let me provoke my readers with some biblical patterns that speak to these questions. Let's begin by painting in at one border of the biblical landscape the concept, found at the beginning of scripture,

that God created humankind in his own "image and likeness." That is a most significant statement. You'll need to paint in the awesome implications of that created design. Notice how God created people to be truly human *in relationship* with each other: *It is not good for man that he be alone*. That "image and likeness" would also mean that the primordial human community was created to live in life-giving communication within the embrace of the Trinitarian community (i.e., "let us make man in *our* image").

That would seem to indicate that God created humankind to be truly human and complete *within human community*. That human community was intended to realize its created and divine design as it dwells intimately within the Trinitarian community. Let me say that again. That would indicate that to be truly human is to live in intimate relationship not only with others in the human community, but also in intimate communion within the Trinitarian community. I would hope that you can begin to sense what that means for the building of Christ's church.

Move now to the other border of our landscape, to the very end of the scriptures. There in the Revelation you will see the eschatological fulfillment of God's same intent and design: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God . . . for the old order of things has passed away'" (Revelation 21:3-4). Between the intent of God for the creation of the human community in the Genesis account, and all the way over to this design of God to live in and with his people as seen in the Revelation account . . . something ought to "click" in our minds. That "old order" spoken of in the Revelation account can hardly be other than the dominion of darkness which was caused by the human rebellion in the garden in which humankind sought to leave God out of their equation. It was that tragic attempt to live "life without God" (or to be their own *gods*) that brought with it death and tears and guilt and dissonance and a groaning creation and *the loss of true community*. The old order is

expressed in alienation of relationships both with God and also within the human community—not to mention the natural world.

Between those borders paint into the picture God's great search and rescue mission. That mission is first spoken of when God promised the patriarch Abraham that in his seed would "all the nations of the earth" be blessed. God's desire to dwell in the midst of the community of his people is graphically portrayed next in the design of the camp of Israel in its wilderness trek. The tabernacle and the Holy of Holies were situated right in the middle of the camp so that God could dwell among his people. And now the search and rescue mission has come in its full glory with the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Eugene Peterson has a delicious paraphrase of John 1: "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood."⁵ Jesus came as the Great Reconciler to reconcile us, to restore our unhindered relationship to God by the blood of his cross, and also to reconcile us to one another—to make us reconcilers.

We need now to begin adding into our landscape the subtler hues and shades that give our biblical picture its depth. What if Jesus did not come only to recreate individual persons into their true relationship with God by his reconciling work? What if Jesus came also to recreate the true human community into the divine intent? What if his reconciling work included the joyous news (gospel) of the human community in communion with the Trinitarian community? That would mean the same kind of relationships that now exist within the divine community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would also animate the human community as men and women relate with each other out of the community's intimacy with the life of God dwelling in that same community by the Spirit. Could this be the meaning of Paul's description of the church as the dwelling place of God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22)?

Is that too wild a picture even to contemplate? I don't think so. The church has come up with a beautiful theological description of the perfect relationships that exist within the Trinitarian community. The term used is *perichoresis*, and it

includes such vivid descriptions as three persons *interpenetrating* each other, *interanimating* each other, *drawing life from* and *pouring life into* each other, *rejoicing in* each other, and *seeking the glory* of each other—mutual reciprocity.⁶ Is the true human community (the church) to exhibit these same self-giving expressions of interanimating love because of it being the creation of the Spirit of the Father and the Son?

Or consider another theological voice, that of Thomas F. Torrance:

The Father is not properly Father apart from the Son and the Spirit, and the Son is not properly Son apart from the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit is not properly Spirit apart from the Father and the Son, for by their individual characteristics or distinctive properties as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they exist in and through one Another and belong to and even live for each Other. Each person is intrinsically who he is for the other two. They coinhere in one another by virtue of the dynamic Communion which they constitute in their belonging to one Another. Hence in establishing communion with us through the Son and in his Spirit, God wants us to participate in this living Communion which as Father, Son and Holy Spirit he eternally is, and it is thus that the nature of the divine Being is disclosed to us as Communion. . . .⁷

If that is anywhere close to an accurate portrayal of the biblical landscape and of the design of God in his great salvation, then it is at this point that we need to ask some probing questions which will challenge many of our assumptions about why the church exists in the first place. It is where we need to get really serious about “the church reformed and always being reformed according to the Word of God.” Because such a design for the church as Torrance suggests assumes an intimacy of relationships with real and specific other persons within community (*gemeinschaft*), persons who have *names* and *faces* and *stories* and mutual caring and ministry together with us—all of which can never be accomplished in any large impersonal society (*gesellschaft*) or organization or church institution (which, unfortunately, is our most dominant norm). It simply

doesn't work in more impersonal societies. Such interanimating love can never be theoretical. It can never be merely a doctrinal proposition. It involves and requires mutual responsibility and accountability with, and to, specific others.

A critical key to the form of the new creation community is found in the Greek word *allêlôn*, or the English words *one another*. The teachings of the New Testament are always couched in exhortations about loving one another, forgiving one another, being subject to one another, bearing one another's burdens—among many such references. That cannot be done in the abstract. New creation community (if it is to be the God-ordained recreation of reconciled human community) has to be in specific groupings small enough to assume such self-giving, personally sensitive, and knowledgeable relationships. One has only to read the letter to the Ephesians through such a “*perichoresis* lens” to sense the life of the divine community being fleshed out in human community. The life of God, as it inhabits the reconciled community (the church) by the Spirit, produces the paradigm of the Trinitarian community (albeit imperfectly and provisionally).

Pope John Paul II stated that there is “no true humanity” apart from Jesus Christ.⁸ I am proposing here that neither is there *true human community*, nor does the human community find its true meaning, apart from Jesus Christ. I am proposing that the paradigm of God's design for true human community is to be the church. I am proposing that the essence of the church is that it is to be the visible demonstration of God's new creation (of the kingdom of God)—the community of the new order dwelling redemptively in the midst of the old order, which now is passing away. I am proposing that the church is to be the (provisional) visible exhibit, here and now, of true human community as God intends it. And I am further proposing that this is the *why* of the church. It is in this communal demonstration of authentic community that the basic and created human need to live together in wholesome mutuality and intimacy finds its desired *shalom*. It is in this way that the church itself becomes the essential demonstration of the gospel of God.

When Jesus Christ declared, "I will build my church," one has to ask the very GenX type of question, "What is that all about?" My GenX and Millennial friends *are* asking that question. They are also looking at the fact that Jesus never left any plan book for creating church institutions. What transpires is something radically unexpected. What emerges are communities that have new creation (or kingdom of God) authenticity through the Spirit presence, communities whose focus is on the glory of God's love in Christ. What emerges are communities whose formation is through the Word of Christ and through their communication with the Father and the Son in the work of prayer. What transpires are communities in the process of learning how to love one another as the Father loves the Son. What transpires are communities that think and behave authentically (Christianly) out of the new creation life that is in them by the Spirit. What emerges are visible and transformational communities of salt and light.

What a huge dilemma we then have. We have difficulty conceiving of the church other than as an institution what with all the professional clergy as institutional managers providing the rites of "uplifting" homilies and the sacraments and "pastoral services" for essentially passive laity. We conceive of the church in terms of sacralized buildings and programs and libraries and schools—all potentially useful in some way or another (maybe).

But then as my professor friend lamented, I wonder what any of this has to do with the kingdom of God (or with God's design for recreated and reconciled human community). Jesus gathered together twelve unsuspecting persons and *formed* them into his disciples. That is the paradigmatic church. His promise to us is that if any two or three are gathered together in his name, then he is there with them. Where? He sat around tables. He picnicked on hillsides. The early church met in assemblies in the public space of the temple precinct. But perhaps more importantly for our pursuit here, they met in their homes (Acts 2:42–47) where they could be together with one another in intimate fellowship, sharing in the apostles' teaching, eating together, and processing their

lives in prayer together. In such a setting they could be responsible to and for each other. They would also know each other's needs and assets and abilities which meant that none considered possessions or needs to be his or her own, nor could they be indifferent to the rest.

The divine Life, the Spirit presence, made them a visible paradigm of God's good news before a hostile but watching world. Pentecost produced a church in which, ultimately, all the alienated people groups of the world could come together in reconciled, wholesome mutuality and caring and adoration and mission. One wonders: Where did we wander from this *good news community* to the more impersonal ecclesiastical institutions so focused on their form and prestige and control and almost everything "religious"—except, that is, the God-designed community with its radical and alternative character?

Any easy answer to that question is probably wrong. Jacques Ellul wrote a whole volume exploring the subversion of Christianity (by that title). He questioned all kinds of "sacred cows" and offered some practical proposals. Still, even as I can question Richard Niebuhr's dismissal of denominations as too facile, so those of us who live in and with substantial church institutions and denominations do not dismiss them because they have somehow missed so much of the divine intent. Who could ever deny the continual working through these two millennia of Jesus Christ as he builds his church with such fragile and imperfect instruments? And who could dismiss the obedience of saints who took what they had together with where they were and sought to serve the Lord whom they loved to the best of their understanding—even if they missed much of the gospel of true community? We do need, however, to be ready to confess that church institutions can, in fact, be sterile in relationships and far less than God's design for new creation community.

People are lonely in today's culture. That is because they are created for relationships with God and with others. Homes and families are in disrepair, and pop culture is shallow and fleeting. But the need for true community remains. It

is probably no wonder that the most significant growth edge of the world church today is in house churches.⁹ It is probably no wonder that church institutions that have a high degree of vitality and fruitfulness tend intentionally to include under their umbrella such “hives”¹⁰ or house churches or small groups in order to provide this very essential requirement of our gospel.

We now have come all the way round to where we began. The answers to our questions: *Why* is the church? *What* is its intent in the heart and mind of God? And *how* is the church essential to the gospel of the kingdom of God? They all are connected. The church is to be the recreated and reconciled human community in Christ. It is the human community as God intended and designed it to be (albeit provisionally due to our still perverse natures). And since we are all created for such relationships, this makes such flesh and blood community indispensable to any good news. How then is such a new creation community to be realized what with all the ecclesiastical bigness and often sterile and impersonal institutional preoccupation? These questions must be taken seriously, even when painful.

I was brought face to face with some of the implications of this one day when two of us were experiencing *the church over coffee* (that’s right—“where any two of you are together in my name there I am with you”—so over coffee fits that!). My friend who had been teaching a course on the sacraments at the seminary began our conversation by reflecting: “I do not really think that the Eucharist should be observed anywhere except in a house church. To eat the bread and drink the cup among strangers whose names I don’t know misses something essential. It should be observed only with those whom I know and to whom I am accountable and for whom I am responsible.” And with that mind-boggling confession he left me for another conversation.

Is that heresy? Or is that a prophetic word?

Let me bring this to a conclusion by relating to my readers that I function in a large church institution with a great heritage. At the same time, it comes with much that is often

impersonal, perplexing, sterile, traditional, draining, costly, and sometimes discouraging, and which probably has nothing at all to do with the kingdom of God. But for me it happens to be where I am at this moment in the providence of God. And like so many of Christ’s people over the centuries, I have found in that institution that there are those others who share the same heart’s desire for authenticity. In the midst of it all, with my *one another* brothers and sisters, we gather, pray, share, study, give ourselves in obedience, take our places of responsibility and ministry as servants in the larger assembly, and in so doing have patiently watched as God has answered our prayers for that larger church institution. We have begun to see the church as the parable of the new creation realized in the pockets of life within it.

We occasionally meet for brunch at a neighborhood pub after the formal services on Sunday morning to report and process where we are in our discipleship. We call this informal gathering (usually no more than eight of us) *our church after church*. We laugh about it, but I think it really expresses something essential to the intent and design of God for his church. We know each other’s stories. We are accountable to each other. We love each other. We are different in so many ways. We are not exclusive. We all have a heart for, and pray for, the walls of separation to come down. We are beginning to see multi-ethnic, multi-cultural community present. We see the first blush of the church as the paradigm of new creation.

In what context do we actually *see* and *experience* and *become formed* into orthodoxy of belief, into integrity of kingdom of God thinking and behavior? Where are we formed into the life of prayer, into *one another* love, into mutual accountability (“be subject to one another”), into missional faithfulness, into life together in the Spirit, into Sermon on the Mount living? Where do we see our light so shining that men and women actually *see* our good works and glorify God? Where, in fact, is the true gift of pastor-teacher possible? I think the answer is that this is possible only in such smaller communities, which, I believe, have to be the *primary expression of the church*. It is in just such contexts of true intimacy,

whether existing as “hives” in larger church institutions or meeting in house churches, that persons experience other persons in the dynamic of the Holy Spirit. It is there that they share their common focus on Jesus, and pray and struggle together over life’s “stuff” as together they seek to live out lives of holy obedience. It is there that they give themselves to the work of making the church the authentic agent of the mission of God to reach those still outside. And, please God, may such vital new creation communities permeate the larger church assemblies so that the waters of life may flow to this thirsty world of men and women who were created by and for God, and for community in God.¹¹

Author

Robert T. Henderson is a retired Presbyterian (PCUSA) minister who lives in Tucker, Georgia. He served as a parish pastor in North Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana and was a founding board member (1989–93) of Presbyterians for Renewal (PFR). He developed the PFR ministry to seminaries and seminarians between 1993 and 2003. He is the author of several books, including *Beating the Church-Going Blahs* (InterVarsity, 1986), *Joy to the World* (Zondervan, 1991), and *Subversive Jesus, Radical Grace* (2001, NavPress). Mr. Henderson graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary and also did special studies at Westminster Theological Seminary (Pennsylvania). In 1975 he was one of twenty-eight evangelical Protestants invited by the Vatican Curia for two weeks of discussion about church renewal and the ministry of the laity. He is married and the father of four adult children.

Notes

1. Quoted in *Foolishness to the Greeks*, by Lesslie Newbigin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 144.
2. I refer my readers to Jacques Ellul, *Subversion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), in which he writes a most provocative treatise on so much that is accepted but alien to the divine intent.
3. Ephesians 4:11–16.
4. 2 Timothy 2:2.
5. Eugene Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress,

- 1993), 185.
6. From Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 163.
7. Thomas Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 132.
8. John Paul II, *On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate: Redemptoris Missio*, December 7, 1990. In the first 20 pages of this superb encyclical, Pope John Paul makes the case that humanity’s meaning, and thus its true humanity, is to be found only in Jesus Christ.
9. As an introduction to this phenomenon, see Wolfgang Simson, *Houses That Change the World* (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K.; Waynesboro, Georgia: OM Publishers, 1998).
10. That’s a Brian McLaren term used in *A Generous Orthodoxy* (El Cajon, California: Emergent YS; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).
11. From an unpublished manuscript, *Enchanted Community: Journey Into the Mystery of the Church*, © Robert T. Henderson, February 17, 2005.