

Wesleyan Sanctification as Patristic Deification

Partakers of the Life Divine: Participation in the Divine Nature in the Writings of Charles Wesley, by S T Kimbrough, Jr. Cascade Books, 2016.

In the early 1960s Albert C. Outler proposed, to the hilarity of his colleagues, that John Wesley deserved a place in the multivolume *A Library of Protestant Thought*, on whose editorial board Outler was then a member. Despite the misgivings of his non-Methodist colleagues, Outler convinced them that Wesley should be regarded not only as a great evangelist, preacher, and pastor but as a great theologian. In the preface to the volume that he subsequently edited for the series, Outler drew heavily on his patristic training to present Wesley as a purveyor of what he called “*evangelical catholicism*” (iv), offering the rich heritage of the early church to the believers.

John Wesley benefited greatly from the late seventeenth-century revival of patristic studies, and Outler proposed that much fruit might come from putting John Wesley in conversation with his patristic roots. In the decades to follow, many have taken up Outler’s charge, and one of the most fruitful areas of research has examined the relationship between Wesleyan sanctification and patristic deification. Wesley’s own work urges us to consider the parallel, for he himself commissioned the translation of early Christian texts; wherever they spoke of deification, he had the word translated “sanctification.”

There are, of course, two different ways to interpret this translation decision. On the one hand, we might view it as yet another Western rejection or accommodation of the central Eastern understanding of salvation. Patristic deification, on this reading, is demoted to whatever it is that Wesley understood sanctification to entail. On the other hand, we might view it the other way around. Perhaps this translation decision indicates that Wesley thought much more highly of sanctification than we might otherwise imagine. Perhaps Wesley thought of sanctification in precisely the same way that the early church thought about deification. Wesleyan sanctification, on this reading, is not simply moral progress by self-effort but is, at its core, a deifying participation in the divine life and nature.

Deified by Partaking of the Divine Life and Participating in the Divine Nature

Scholarly consensus with respect to John Wesley seems to be moving in the direction of the second view, but with respect to Charles Wesley, the discussion has hardly even begun. In his *Partakers of the Life Divine: Participation in the Divine Nature in the Writings of Charles Wesley* (hereafter, *Partakers*), S T Kimbrough, Jr., Research Fellow at Duke Divinity School’s Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition, makes a significant contribution to that discussion.

The book’s value consists primarily in its collection and categorization of numerous passages throughout Wesley’s writings that indicate that his understanding of salvation bears substantial resemblance to that of the fathers. Wesley uses the verb *deify* only once (99), when speaking of those who have passed beyond death as those who “drink the *deifying stream*” (100).¹ On another occasion, he calls the believers “gods”: “*And receive us as gods to a share of thy throne*” (139). While both of these passages speak of life after death, Wesley also regularly speaks of the believers becoming divine during their lifetime: one of his hymns includes a prayer that God would “*make us all divine*” (38), and in a poetic dialogue between an angel and a human being, he has the human being say to the angel, “*Our nature too becomes divine*” (43).

But *Partakers* does not draw only on Wesley’s use of explicit language of deification to illustrate the deep affinity between Wesley’s and patristic understandings of salvation. As reflected in its title, *Partakers* also examines how Wesley regularly employs the biblical language of partaking or participating in the divine life and nature, with Kimbrough claiming that this is at the very core of Wesley’s understanding of the Christian life. It is not simply an occasional theme but the fount from which all others proceed (147). *Partakers* cites two journal entries from Wesley’s early career in which he defines the Christian life as “a participation of the divine nature.” In one of them he recounts a conversation with a Mrs. Delamotte: “Three years ago God sent me to call you from the form to the power of godliness. *I told you what true religion was, a new birth, a participation of the divine nature*” (16). For the rest of his life, Kimbrough tells us, Wesley “holds fast to this concept” (19).

Wesley’s hymns and poems consistently express the desire

that God would “communicate” His nature (64), “impart” His holiness (31), and “fill us with the life divine” (24). This, for Wesley, results in the “transform[ation]” of our nature into His (23); it “forms Jehovah in our hearts” (35); and it makes us a “transcript of the Trinity” (66). This participation comes to us through the incarnation of the Son: “Made flesh for our sake, / That we might partake / The Nature Divine” (40). It is applied to us by the Spirit’s indwelling: “Spirit, principle of grace,... / Fill us with thy holiness, / Breathe thyself into our heart” (28). Only thus transformed is the believer able to live a Christian and church life “with, in and through the Triune God” (146).

Problematic Parallels

While the catalog of Wesley’s texts is helpful and will surely aid further research, *Partakers* is not always helpful in its analysis. Kimbrough is a prominent contributor to the present dialogue between Orthodox Christians and Methodists, and his book is deeply shaped by this context. References to participation in the divine life and nature in Wesley’s writings are collected and arranged by topic and then compared with similar Orthodox ideas, whether ancient or modern. No claim of direct influence is made. In fact, Kimbrough stresses that we possess no evidence that Wesley ever read the fathers directly (2). *Partakers* does point to several possible direct influences on Wesley who themselves drew explicitly from the early church—in particular, Lancelot Andrewes, Richard Hooker, and Henry Scougal—with Scougal, whose *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* had a deep and well-documented influence on the Methodist movement (5, 17), being the most instrumental. Kimbrough argues that the lack of explicit direct influence is of no consequence to his primary aim, which is to draw out the parallels between Wesley and a variety of patristic and Orthodox voices for the sake of dialogue between their two traditions (3).

While there is nothing wrong with cataloging such parallels, there is always the danger that their artificiality will shape our understanding of the involved thinkers in unhelpful ways. Some of the parallels, for instance, are tenuous at best. In the very first chapter Kimbrough addresses the distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies (a crucial distinction in Orthodox accounts of deification beginning, particularly, with Gregory Palamas (13)). Kimbrough then proceeds to quote one of Wesley’s hymns, which speaks of God as “essence incomprehensible” and then an entirely different hymn, which speaks of God’s knowledge of “the energy divine” (12-13). *Partakers* warns that we should not read too much into the parallel (14), but one wonders whether there really is a parallel at all. A mere similarity of expression spread across two different hymns is not sufficient grounds for substantive comparison and dialogue.

In other places the parallels are not simply tenuous but potentially misleading. In the chapter on the sacraments, Kimbrough rightly points out that Wesley (and his brother) had some of the most realist sacramental theologies on offer in the England of their day: “From house to house they broke the bread / Impregnated with Life divine, / And drank the Spirit of their Head / Transmitted in the sacred wine” (54). There is no doubt, then, that Wesley thought that we are deified by partaking of the sacraments, and, in this respect, the Orthodox parallel is perfectly germane. But the question remains as to how important the sacraments are in Wesley’s general understanding of the believer’s progress in deification. Is it but one way that a believer partakes of the divine life and nature, or does it belong together with the Son’s incarnation and the Spirit’s indwelling, as part of the necessary conduit of that participation? *Partakers* is careful to insist that “in Charles Wesley’s view deification transpires through baptism and the Eucharist but also through private experience” but more often gives the sacraments a preeminent, almost essential, place in Wesley’s understanding of how the believers are deified; Kimbrough states, “One becomes like Christ through the sacraments” (140-141). The claim here is not simply that the sacraments are *one* way that we become like Christ but *the* way. Modern Orthodox theologians do, to a significant extent, bestow such centrality to the sacraments, and ecumenical exigency may be a primary motivation in Kimbrough’s presenting them as such in Wesley. But it is not clear that this is really the case for Wesley or, for that matter, for the fathers. It is certainly the case that when the fathers speak about the sacraments, they speak about deification, but the converse is not always true; the fathers often speak about deification without speaking about the sacraments. Indeed, the very paradigms of patristic deification—the desert fathers—often lived entirely outside of the sacramental life of the church. At least in the fathers, then, the sacraments cannot be necessary for deification in the way that they seem to have become in much of the modern Orthodox dialogue, and *Partakers* simply does not give us enough material to make a judgment regarding their centrality in Wesley.

Even as *Partakers* makes the continuity between Wesley and the fathers too close with respect to the sacraments, there are also places where it could have more adequately pointed out the discontinuities between them. One particular issue is the right way to understand the relationship between the process of deification and the practice of the virtues. A crucial question is whether our participation in the divine nature explains our moral betterment or the other way around. For a significant portion of the Orthodox tradition, the means of deification is the ascetic practice of the virtues. Indeed, for many Orthodox thinkers, deification outside of a strict monastic ascesis is virtually impossible. This does not seem to

be the case for Wesley. Kimbrough occasionally slips, arguing that “as human beings emulate these [divine] qualities and activities of love their own natures and those of others are transformed into God’s nature” (99), but he generally presents Wesley as understanding that it is the other way around; that is, it is the believer’s participation in the divine life and nature that causes the change in inward character and outward activity: “One sees that partaking of the divine nature has a visible result. There is an inward and an outward bearing of God’s image, for his indwelling conveys all of God’s purity, holiness, and love, which the one moving toward deification now personifies” (105). This seems to be the right way to read Wesley, and the book would be stronger had it reflected more deeply on Wesley’s contribution to this issue.

This issue could have been easily clarified by attending more carefully to the matter of the taxonomy of deification theories in recent deification studies. Kimbrough cites Paul M. Collins when claiming that the fathers spoke of deification in three different ways: “nominal, analogical, and metaphorical,” concluding after a brief description of the three that Wesley has a metaphorical understanding of deification (138). These three versions come from Norman Russell. Despite its problems, his taxonomy has become a standard reference point in deification studies, and tending to it more carefully would have made *Partakers* a much stronger book. Russell, for instance, further distinguishes his metaphorical category into realist and ethical approaches:

The ethical approach takes deification to be the attainment of likeness to God through ascetic and philosophical endeavour, believers reproducing some of the divine attributes in their own lives by imitation...The realistic approach assumes that human beings are in some sense transformed by deification. (2)

One of the difficulties with Russell’s taxonomy is immediately apparent: to say that a metaphorical approach of deification is realist seems to be a contradiction in terms. Still, had Kimbrough read Russell more carefully, he could have clarified that Wesley seems to fall squarely in the realist camp. To rely on Russell (via Collins) and say that Wesley uses *deification* and *participation* metaphorically is not only less helpful than it might have been but potentially misleading, for a metaphor on its own seems to entail that, at bottom, deification is nothing more than a manner of speech and does not involve any real transformation in the believer. Wesley himself clearly thinks

that real transformation is occurring, and his hymns are suffused with desperate prayer for it.

Finally, it would have been helpful for *Partakers* to spend some time reflecting on what Wesley has to offer to our understanding of salvation as deification. Cataloging attestation to the doctrine of deification throughout Christian history has its merits, particularly when there is resistance to the idea that deification is a legitimate description of Christian salvation, but those days are largely behind us. Very few informed theologians would deny that deification is an apt and accepted characterization of salvation; what we want to know now is not simply that particular Christian theologians taught deification but what distinctives they offer to our understanding of it. Perhaps, though, this is too much to ask of Kimbrough. Maybe Wesley does not have much to offer with respect to deification as a doctrine. His real contribution might be his translation of the common heritage of the Church into poetic form, a form that more easily penetrates the heart and shapes its longings and desires. As Kimbrough nicely points out, Wesley’s lengthy collection of hymns on the Trinity is a systematic attempt to convey the teachings of William Jones’s tract *The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity* into verse (61). Wesley’s part in the fight against the anti-Trinitarianism of his day was not to write a theological treatise but to translate the best theology of his day into verse for the sake of its transmission to the believers. Perhaps, then, this is the right way to capture the contribution of Wesley to the teaching of deification: he did not much advance the basic contours of the doctrine; instead, he sought to convey the deepest conception of Christian salvation in verse so as best to inscribe it into the aspirations, longings, and desires of any who might sing his hymns. It is all the more regrettable, then, that so few of those hymns feature in the *United Methodist Hymnal*.

by Mitchell Kennard

Note

¹The italics in this and all other quotations in this review are added by Kimbrough for emphasis.

Works Cited

- Outler, Arthur C. Preface. *John Wesley*, Oxford UP, 1964. A Library of Protestant Thought.
- Russell, Norman. *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*. Oxford UP, 2004.

A Critical Response to a Catholic Perspective of Deification

Life in the Trinity: A Catholic Vision of Communion and Deification by Philip Krill. Lulu Publishing Services, 2017.

True to its title, Philip Krill's *Life in the Trinity: A Catholic Vision of Communion and Deification* (hereafter, *Life*) persuasively elucidates, from a Catholic perspective, two central biblical themes—the Trinity and deification. *Life* draws on patristic sources, biblical texts, and twentieth-century theologians¹ to buttress its central thesis:

Life in the Trinity is the purpose for which we were created. It is the motivation for the Incarnation and the miracle of Redemption...No greater gift can be imagined than our deification in Christ. The Trinity is the Source, Goal, and Archetype of all human "being." "God himself is the life of those who participate in him." (212)

Elsewhere, *Life* states this thesis even more succinctly: "It is the apogee of our faith to realize that through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, humankind is now capacitated for and invited into the Divine Economy through this Trinitarian Liturgy" (188).

Life is organized into three major parts, each part containing three sections, and each section containing three topics. The first part, "Divine Personhood," comprises sections on the trinity, incarnation, and *Corpus Mysticum*. *Corpus Mysticum* is "a term that describes the Mystery of Jesus as a Divine Person-in-communion," whom the church fathers saw as a "Corporate Person" (52). The second part, "Human Personhood," comprises the sections "Alterity," "Communio," and "Eros." The third part, "Deified Personhood," comprises the sections "Theosis: the Goal of Deification," "Leitourgia: The Means of Deification," and "Ecclesia: The Sacrament of Deification."

Life Presenting a Personal, Immanent, and Economical Trinity

Life presents an orthodox understanding of the Trinity, relying on both the testimony of church fathers and Scripture. According to *Life*, "trinitarian theology must be exquisitely Christocentric and completely *pneumatological* (Spirit-driven)" (6). The "One God in Three Persons" in the Trinity are distinct yet inseparable, a "communion (*koinonia*) of ontologically distinct yet eternally inseparable Divine Persons" (9). They live in constant communion with one another. *Life* states that *perichoresis*, a term "coined by the church fathers,... describes, in its own, untranslatable way, the *ecstatic*

communion shared and circulated among the Persons of the Trinity" (24-25). *Life's* point is that constant communion and participation is what characterizes life in the Trinity. As such, the Trinity is a corporate person with a life in absolute oneness and harmony, with a perfect relationship in and with one another.

According to *Life*, the Trinity is both immanent and economic. *Life*, through the voice of Karl Rahner's commentary on John 1:14, connects the Trinity to the incarnation: "The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity" (31). *Life* goes on to say that this statement by Rahner means that "in and through the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Eternal Word made flesh, we truly encounter the fullness of the Trinity"; hence, "the economic Trinity reveals and conveys the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the Source and Cause of the economic Trinity" (32). Kerry S. Robichaux helpfully correlates the immanent Trinity with an alternate term, *essential Trinity*, which refers to "the Trinity in the aspect of His inner self-existence" ("Can Human Beings" 41). The economical Trinity is manifest in "the saving action of God that commences with the incarnation and ultimately leads to the full salvation of human beings" (41).

Life Failing to Identify That the Mystery of the Tripartite Man Created in God's Image Is for Receiving, Containing, and Expressing the Divine Life

The second part, "Human Personhood," posits what *Life* considers as a radical thesis: "*The human person, considered in and of himself or herself is just as much a mystery, as each of the Persons of the Trinity*" (77). *Life's* understanding of human personhood demands a more critical response. *Life* refers to a "triune subjectivity within the human person that mirrors the Blessed Trinity," a "triune consciousness" that "some have identified...with the image and likeness of God" (129). *Life* says that others have been less bold in speaking of "the human person as comprised of mind, body, and spirit, or of body, soul, and spirit" (129), thereby implying *Life's* familiarity with the biblical concept of man as a tripartite person with the ability to contact the physical, psychological, and spiritual realms. After this brief preface, *Life* premises the rest of the chapter, entitled "Triune Subjectivity," on a human subjectivity and "triune consciousness" that considers "*cognition (mind, intellect), volition (will, free choice), and affection (feeling, emotion)*" as "key components of human interiority" (129). As Witness Lee presents in *The Parts of Man*, the mind, emotion, and will are the three parts of the soul; Lee further explicates that in the biblical context the soul is distinct from the human spirit (5-7). *Life*, however, focuses exclusively on man's soul, not the human spirit.

Life neglects the crucial function and central role of the

human spirit. As Lee states, based on John 4:24, “We can only contact God by our spirit, because God is Spirit” (*Parts* 11). Lee identifies the three parts of the human spirit—conscience, fellowship, and intuition, each having a particular function (5). *Life’s* neglect of the distinctive functions of the human spirit leads to a seriously flawed conclusion regarding how to know the will of God, as illustrated by the following statement:

When properly trained, purified, and deified through conversion, reception of the sacraments, and contemplative prayer,...affective responses to the objects, persons, and situations we encounter become a virtually infallible means of discerning the Will of God for our lives. Emotion (defined here as *eros*) is the ineluctable *value-response* within the human person that most deeply resembles and represents the voice of God. (131)

According to Romans 12:2, knowing the will of God is related not to the emotion but to the mind that has been transformed and renewed. This renewing and transformation is in turn a process involving both the Holy Spirit and the human spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:23; Titus 3:5). Lee, referencing 1 Corinthians 2:11, says that “our soul knows by reason or by circumstance, but our spirit can perceive without these. This is intuition, the direct sense in our spirit” (*Parts* 5). Hence, it is more biblically accurate to say that knowing the will of God comes from the intuitive sense in our spirit interpreted by and with the mind that is being deified through transformation and renewing. Knowing God’s will is not an emotional process.

Life describes human personhood both before and after the fall. *Life* asserts that before the fall man was in constant communion and fellowship with God and had a worshipful relationship with Him. *Life* describes the idyllic condition of man before the fall: “Everything in Paradise conveyed to them a sense of union with God” (172). However, after the fall man had to resort to the “human construct” of religion and lost his communal relationship with God (175). The problems that human beings have with one another and with God are really the problem of a human personhood that cannot commune with God and with others.

According to *Life*, deified personhood is, on one hand, the restoration back to a relational and communal life with the Triune God that existed before the fall and, on the other hand, an advance to become “trees of life.” *Life*

considers that “with the coming of Christ, the world regained its being as an instrument and sacrament of *communio* with the Triune God. Life is now returned to fallen man as the ordinary means of divine transformation” (175). Here *Life* seems to overstate man’s pre-fall condition, because before the fall man had yet to partake of the tree of life. Man had the human life, but he had not yet received the divine life, as typified by the tree of life. *Life* does state elsewhere states that there is more than just restoration: “When living ‘in Christ,’ our condition is greater and more glorious [than] the Original Unity in the Garden of Eden. ‘Participatio’ in God through Christ is the elevation of human life into the divine life of the Trinity” (167). A proper understanding of this point has implications for a proper understanding of deification. Robichaux reminds us that “before the fall Adam was not a deified man; he was not created with God’s life and nature but only with the capacity to receive these. The fall delayed the realization of what we humans were created for and brought in negative elements that required our redemption” (“That We” 24). God’s redemption and salvation are not merely to bring us back to Adam’s pre-fall state but to bring us forward—toward His original purpose of dispensing His divine life into man. According to *Life*, “deification...implies an influx of Divine Life causing human life to come to perfection by ‘participating in’ but not ‘changing into’ the nature of Him Who penetrates it with His Love” (162). *Life* proposes that the aim of divinization is to make us trees of life: “By giving ourselves completely to participation in the divine *leitourgia*, we allow our identities [to] be divinely transformed and our lives [to] become ‘trees of life’ capable of producing ‘fruits of the Spirit’ in season and out (Rev. 22:2; 2 Tim. 4:2)” (208). Adam was never such a “tree of life,” since, as indicated by Genesis 3:22, he was prevented from taking from the tree of life and eating.

***Life* Presenting a Cogent and Persuasive Case for Theosis as the Mystery and Goal of God’s Economy of Salvation**

Life speculates that “many, if not most, Christians have never heard of *theosis*” (154). *Life*, after laying the groundwork that the Trinity should be understood in the context of relationship, says, “*Theosis* is the anthropological corollary of the Trinitarian Mystery” (154). *Life* points out, “Our deification in Christ parallels and participates in the hypostatic union that exists within the Trinitarian Life itself” (155). Theosis “is the realization of the Trinity’s eternal desire to reestablish a connubial

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union with a fallen world,” and is the “grace of the Holy Spirit, made possible by the Paschal Sacrifice of the Son” (155). Theosis involves Christ’s death; hence, it involves the Son’s incarnation. *Life* further points out that deification is the purpose and goal of creation, incarnation, and redemption: “Such is the purpose and the end of the Incarnation. ‘Participation’ in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the *telos* (goal) for which we are created and redeemed” (167). Theosis is “the purpose of the Incarnation, and the signature doctrine of patristic Christianity” (153). “Because God has become man, man can become God” (167).

Life’s Definition of Theosis versus Heretical Views

Life explains that God shares “His divinity with man in such a way that the image of God in which [man] was created blossoms into full *likeness*” (154). In theosis, “the human person comes to ‘participate’ in the very Triune Life of God” and becomes “by participation” what God is “by nature” (154). Deification occurs “without confusion or change” of either the human nature or the divine nature (155). “Persons so engrafted ‘into Christ’ remain human persons, yet they become God ‘by participation’” (166).

Life also clearly identifies what theosis is not:

Theosis (deification, divinization) is to be immediately and radically differentiated from the heretical views of man’s *absorption* into God (monism). Pantheism, eternal progression, quietism, and other heterodox beliefs that picture human persons as somehow melding into the Divine Essence are perversions of the patristic doctrine of *theosis*. We are “*partakers* in the divine nature” (2 Pt. 1:4); we are not usurpers of it. (153-154)

Life particularly highlights the importance of the oft-used New Testament phrase *in Christ* and relates it to theosis: “To live ‘in Christ,’ means to become deified. To be united hypostatically to Jesus is to become divinized through our ‘incorporation’ or ‘assimilation’ into Him” (153). *Life* clarifies that “‘assimilation’ or ‘assumption’ into Jesus [is] through His Incarnation” and should not be understood as “absorption” (166). “The concept of ‘participation’ does not threaten the distinction between God and His creation, just as it never impedes the difference between Christ and those who ‘partake of His divine nature’” (166). Rather, the concept of participation secures and guarantees the distinctions between Christ and those who partake of what He is (166). *Life* states that “the immutability and impassibility of God are not compromised by the assumptive power of the Incarnation” (166). Moreover, “‘assumption’ (without absorption) into the triune life of God through Christ is the epicenter of the Christian mystery” (167).

Life’s Scriptural and Patristic Basis for Theosis

Life tells us that “biblical texts abound testifying to the centrality of deification in the mission and message of Christ” (157). *Life* quotes Daniel Keating, who says, “The notion of becoming ‘gods’ is rooted in a Christological interpretation of Psalm 82:6” (159), a passage that Jesus quoted and interpreted in John 10:34-35. *Life* considers 2 Peter 1:4 to be the “key New Testament text regarding *theosis*” (157). Based on John 17:11, 22-23, and 26, *Life* explains that

theosis unites the human person to the Father in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit imparts to such a person “all that is God except His essence as God.” This includes all the attributes, gifts, and powers of God. One becomes not only a son, but also an heir (Gal. 4:7)...One is “begotten” of God because he is incorporated into the “only begotten” Son of God. (156)

Life further points out that “the letters of Paul (especially Ephesians and Colossians), as well as the gospel of John (3:8; 14:21-23; 15:4-8; 17:21-23; 1 John 3:2; 4:12), are particularly rich in their witnesses to the centrality of the doctrine of divinization” (158). *Life* goes on to say that “these New Testament texts concerning *theosis* were prepared for and foreshadowed by key Old Testament texts”—for example, “Moses...became ‘*like God*’ to Pharaoh” (Ex. 7:1) and “his countenance shone with the glory of the Lord (Ex. 34:30)” (159).

Life demonstrates the patristic affirmation of theosis by providing a “sampling of patristic texts” that span the second to the twelfth century and that testify “to the power of *theosis* and the *tantum-quantum* (divine exchange)” (156). Robichaux, in examining the “pedigree” of the doctrine of deification, says, “By far the church’s most celebrated expression concerning deification comes from Athanasius, who quite elegantly declared that the Son of God ‘became man that we might be made God’” (“Can Human Beings” 31). Robichaux also points out why Athanasius is a particularly important linchpin in persuading those who may “squirm in embarrassment that such words came from the same pen that helped to establish our common views on the Triune God and the person of Christ, the very matters that make us Christians in faith” (“That We” 21); Robichaux reminds those who would dismiss rather than confront deification that “it was also Athanasius who first, in 367, after much discussion in the early church, formally defined the authoritative list of books that make up our New Testament” (“Can Human Beings” 31).

The doctrine of theosis, which the early church fathers also understood as deification, divinization, or “participation

in the divine nature,” was “the heart and soul” of their theology (*Life* 145). *Life* laments that “for many, the Christian faith has been reduced either to a simple moralism (works righteousness) or a flimsy fideism (eternal security)” (145). *Life* applies this concern in the case of both those in the Catholic and Evangelical persuasions: “Salvation is usually interpreted as ‘going to heaven’ (Catholic), or ‘accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior’ (Evangelical)” (146). Witness Lee in the latter part of his ministry, which spanned seven decades, states, “It is only by God’s becoming man to make man God that the Body of Christ can be produced. This point is the high peak of the vision given to us by God” (Lee, *High Peak* 15). Lee posits that at least one reason this matter is not more widely known is that although Athanasius’s word “became a maxim in church history...gradually people in Christianity not only would not teach this but did not dare to teach this” (15).

Life Advocating an Experiential and Relational Understanding of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Theosis

Our patristic forebears had an organic, not merely forensic, view of the New Testament Scriptures. *Life* states, “These progenitors of our faith...consider humanity’s ‘organic union’ with the Triune God to be the central theme in the letters of St. Paul and the gospel of St. John” (157). Accordingly, they view the doctrine of theosis as “the full flowering of the mission of Christ and the mystical vision of St. Paul and the Apostles” (157).

Theosis is related to the Christian living but is in contrast to the self-effort of imitation. Living “in Christ” is something much greater than “imitating Christ” and is, accordingly, “a fundamentally different way of imagining our vocation as Christians” (145). *Life* considers deification to be a greater mystery than “growing in holiness” (147). This conclusion derives from *Life*’s assertion that incorporation into Jesus is infinitely deeper than merely imitating Christ: “Deification involves the transfiguration of the whole person through an entrance into Christ’s own Transfiguration and glorification” (147).

To become deified or divinized is to “experience the mystery of christification” (153). To become a “partaker of the divine nature” is to become “a living theophany of the love of God” and to ‘participate’ in the very life of the Trinity through incorporation into the person of Jesus Christ” (153). Since salvation is a person, Jesus Christ, “He incorporates us into His Corporate (Mystical) Body”

(147). He imparts immortality to us, “thereby giving us a share in His Trinitarian life” (147).

Life emphasizes that the phrase *in Christ* is the key “that unlocks the mystery of what has been aptly described as ‘Pauline Mysticism’” (53). *Life* considers Paul to be “calling us from an ‘extrinsic,’ ‘forensic,’ and ‘transactional’ relationship with Christ to a more biblical, intimate, and ultimately ‘mystical’ ‘knowledge’ of Him” (54).

The experiential aspect of deification is in, by, and with the Holy Spirit. *Life* posits that “persons in *theosis*” should “exercise a perpetual *epiclesis* [invocation of the Holy Spirit] on the altar of their hearts” (210). To them calling upon the Holy Spirit is “as natural as breathing”; such persons “are acutely aware” that “it is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me” (210). They also “instinctively know that ‘the Spirit prays within them with sighs too deep for words’ (Rom. 8:26)” (210). Hence, they “live by and in the Holy Spirit” and “in oneness with Jesus, solely for the honor and glory of the Father” (210).

IT IS ONLY BY GOD’S BECOMING
MAN TO MAKE MAN GOD
THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST
CAN BE PRODUCED. THIS POINT
IS THE HIGH PEAK OF THE VISION
GIVEN TO US BY GOD.

Life Defending the Physical Aspects of the Sacraments and Promoting Prayer with Idol Images and Icons

As indicated by its title, *Life* is written from an unabashedly Catholic perspective. Furthermore, the perspective is concerning very funda-

mental topics, namely life, the Trinity, communion, and deification. Therefore, it is unavoidable that fundamental differences with the Protestant theological and practical underpinnings will enter the conversation. As previously noted, *Life* draws on the theologian Barth and his contemporary Balthasar, with particular praise for their “Christocentric” theology (44). *Life* appraises Barth’s theology as an “evangelical theology” that “begins and ends with an *encounter* with the *living Word of God*” (45).

A correspondent of Karl Barth once queried him as to the main differences between the Roman Catholic and Protestant confessions. In #126 of *Karl Barth Letters: 1961-1968* Barth responds with seven points, while cautioning that differences should be stated carefully since these differences might not be “irreconcilable antitheses” but, rather, “differences only in emphasis.” Two of the differences identified by Barth provide some helpful context for evaluating *Life*’s Catholic perspective on deification.

The first relevant contrast is the Evangelical position,

according to Barth, of the “central significance of proclaiming (preaching) the biblical gospel” versus the Roman Catholic Church’s “prevailing concentration on administering the so-called ‘sacraments.’” Even if both Catholics and Protestants were to mutually acknowledge that deification is the high peak of the divine revelation (which, admittedly, they do not), there still remains a lack of agreement with respect to the process by which the believers are deified. *Life* states that the divinization process involves the sacraments: “In *theosis*, we are speaking of the *hypostatic* union of the divine Person of Jesus with the individual human persons who are assimilated into Him through faith, the sacraments, and the power of the Holy Spirit” (155). Here *Life* places the sacraments between faith and the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere, *Life* promotes conversion, “frequent reception of the sacraments,” and ongoing prayer (108). Among the Catholic sacraments, the Eucharist may be considered as the central one, because of its continual practicality. With the Eucharist comes the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. In the context of an entire chapter on the Eucharist, *Life* devotes considerable effort to contextualize the true meaning, significance, and value of transubstantiation. *Life* refers to the “hyperbolic claim” of “one liturgical theologian” who “called transubstantiation, ‘the suicide of sacramental theology’” and then quickly affirms belief in “the Real Presence” and states that transubstantiation is the “bed-rock and unquestioned consensus of the early church” (186).

Here we can apply Barth’s rubric, which distinguishes the Catholic emphasis on the sacraments from the Protestant emphasis on preaching the gospel. The Evangelicals would perhaps emphasize the operations of faith and regeneration, the necessity of believing in Christ’s person and work, and of being baptized (some further emphasizing that believing should precede baptism). *Life* refers to the Gospel of John repeatedly (over fifty times), but there are no references to the many passages often used by Evangelicals, such as John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5, and 15-16.² The Catholic emphasis on transubstantiation points to a fundamental insistence on the visible, physical, and material realm, that is, on a physical process that is physically initiated. Alternatively, the Evangelical theological emphasis would appear to prioritize an operation that initiates from faith and from the inner parts of man, beginning with repentance and regeneration. Generally speaking, however, neither Protestants nor Catholics emphasize the Triune God’s purpose and economy to dispense Himself as life into tripartite human beings in order to transform them into His image and to reconstitute them and join them together as living members of the Body of Christ that they may become a deified corporate expression of Christ in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

Another difference among the seven noted by Barth is the Evangelical position concerning the “centrality of Jesus Christ as true Son of God and Man,” which is in contrast to the Roman Catholic position of the “apparent sharing of this centrality by Mary as the human mother of God.” This is the second relevant difference that is applicable in the context of this review. A careful reader may point out that *Life* does not use the title *Mother of God* and that only once does it refer to “Mary, the virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity,” and then only in quoting an A.D. 451 creed in the front matter. However, Barth here is identifying not merely a difference concerning an extra-Biblical title ascribed to Mary but to “Mariology,” and, derivatively, to the Roman Catholic system of image worship and veneration.

Life repeatedly uses the word *contemplate* in various forms (over seventy times)—often generically but many times in reference to a more defined Catholic tradition. For example, *Life* laments that “for far too long we have had to endure the effects of the divorce of theology from contemplative and mystical Catholic spirituality” (37). In certain instances, *Life* is recommending contemplation as a path to deeper comprehension: “These crucial distinctions can be grasped and understood only through mystical and contemplative intimacy with Jesus in prayer” (44). At other times, *Life* seems to be proudly promoting a superior method reserved for Catholics and then only for those of a special class: “Balthasar took the Christology of Barth to mystical dimensions unreachable for the Calvinist [Barth] who lacked a developed sense of the Catholic contemplative tradition” (46). What then is this superior “contemplative tradition”?

In its introductory chapter *Life* states, “Images and icons found in both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions convey something of the depths of the Incarnation and the intimacy that obtains within the Trinitarian *Communio*” (7). Krill gives personal testimony of “gazing upon” a “Russian icon of the Blessed Virgin” (7). After describing a second icon, he goes on to promote the “endless...associations and inspirations” that can be gained by “contemplating” such masterpieces (8). In a footnote in this section, *Life* recommends a book entitled *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons* (8). *Life* concludes, “In both icons mentioned here, we catch a glimmer of the Trinitarian Mystery...The meaning of being human is found in our contemplation of, and union with, the Triune God” (8). *Life* also promotes the “sacramental sign” derived from “the icons of Jesus in His Ascension” seen “in the domes of [the] basilicas” of “ancient Christian churches” (179). Based on this data we can ascertain that the Catholic contemplative tradition involves an element of concentration on and interaction with idol images and icons. An emphasis on the visible and physical realm seems to be a common principle

underlying both transubstantiation and praying with images. In contrast, spiritual realities, including the Divine Trinity, the divine life, fellowship (communion), and deification, are experienced and made real not by interaction with physical images and substances but in the Spirit with our spirit (Rom. 8:16).

Life contains at least three serious flaws. The first concerns *Life's* apologetics for the Catholic reliance on the physical application of experimental spiritual realities (for example, transubstantiation in the Eucharistic sacrament). The second, and most serious, flaw concerns *Life's* exaltation of "ascetic and contemplative experience" (210), which, in application, involves interaction with physical images and icons. A third area of concern is an error of omission—in that *Life* fails to identify the role of the Spirit with our spirit (cf. Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17), that is, His dispensing the divine life into our tripartite being to make us a corporate expression of the Triune God. It is this corporate expression—Christ's mystical Body comprising Christ as the Head and His regenerated believers as His members—that becomes God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. The Triune God desires to dispense Himself as life into tripartite human beings in order to transform them into His image and to reconstitute them and conjoin them as living members of the Body of Christ, making them deified men in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, *Life* provides a helpful and valuable contribution to the reawakening dialog concerning deification, which has been an overlooked but nevertheless central theme embodied in the canon of the Scriptures. *Life* provides a lucid presentation of deification that highlights the scriptural base and the patristic testimony of this great truth. *Life* provides an orthodox yet refreshing definition and perspective of the communal, interactive, and participative Trinity. This should further motivate Christians to seek and experience Him more. Furthermore, *Life* demonstrates that deification is not only an individual process but also a corporate goal. This corresponds with God's desire to have man incorporated into the relationship, fellowship, in and with Himself in His Trinity. Therefore, *Life* provides helpful insight to an area that has been substantially neglected and even opposed by a large part of Protestant Christianity.

by James Fite

Notes

¹Most notably Catholics Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) and Protestant Karl Barth.

²*Life* repeatedly refers to the "only-begotten," but I could not find any reference to "everyone who believes into Him...would have eternal life."

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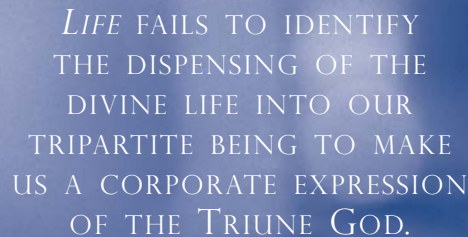
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LIFE FAILS TO IDENTIFY
THE DISPENSING OF THE
DIVINE LIFE INTO OUR
TRIPARTITE BEING TO MAKE
US A CORPORATE EXPRESSION
OF THE TRIUNE GOD.

A Faithful Portrayal of the Trinity in the Scriptures

God the Trinity: Biblical Portraits, by Malcolm B. Yarnell III. B & H Academic, 2016.

God the Trinity: Biblical Portraits (hereafter, *Trinity*) is an exegetical analysis of several important portions of the Scriptures, undertaken by Malcom B. Yarnell III, Professor of Systematic Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. *Trinity* seeks to demonstrate that the truth concerning the Trinity is not mere philosophical construction around unclear scriptural data but the very thought in and idiom of the Bible—embedded in the text and critical to orthodox Christianity. Through the course of its analysis *Trinity* addresses methods of biblical interpretation and advocates an approach that "requires the graces of both *logos* and *pneuma*" rather than the scientific or artistic methods that have gradually influenced the present methods of interpretation (ix). *Trinity* succeeds both in its approach of seeing the Scriptures as an immersive whole and in its goal of presenting the Scriptures as

abounding with trinitarian thought and containing the truth concerning the Trinity.

The Trinity in the Scriptures

In its first chapter, “The Identity of God,” *Trinity* begins its discourse on methods of Bible study and interpretation, and it examines the significance of the name in Matthew 28:19. Regarding biblical interpretation, *Trinity* suggests that most contemporary theologians, having been significantly influenced by the Enlightenment, approach the Scriptures largely through a propositional idiom and have thus considered the truth concerning the Trinity to be ill-defined in the Scriptures (9-11). *Trinity* suggests that just as we must approach different ages and cultures on their own terms and according to their own idioms if we want to understand those ages/cultures, an interpreter of the Bible must be careful to not approach the Scriptures according to a preferred idiom, which will quickly lead to misunderstanding, but according to the Scriptures’ own idiom, which, as Yarnell shows, is the Trinity (6-7).

Trinity highlights three strategies for reading the Scriptures—strategies that maintain “classical orthodox Christianity and the evangelical historical-critical method” (12): first, “recognizing and exploring the development of the Old Testament message about God and the Messiah into the New Testament” (12); second, “asking...basic and relevant grammatical questions of personal identification” (13); and third, “discerning the nature of God through his activity” (13). Based on these strategies, *Trinity* evaluates Matthew 28:19 and notes that this verse contains the clearest reference to the Trinity. *Trinity* states,

God the Trinity is revealed through word and deed in the Bible, even though not in our propositional form. In this important text God is clearly named, singularly but completely, “the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (18)

Trinity recapitulates some concerns regarding the understanding of Matthew 28:19 put forth by the Council of Antioch in A.D. 341 (19-20) and argues that “the use of ὁνομα in the singular indicates primarily a unified identity” (20). *Trinity* further argues that the use of the connective conjunction καί indicates that “the proper understanding of the baptismal commission must place the three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in a unity, first” and that “out of that basic unity, three coordinate relations then unfold” (21). Thus, the identity of God as revealed in this verse is one in a name that includes three relations. *Trinity* ends its consideration of the name in Matthew 28:19 by explaining that baptism into the name probably indicates that a new believer’s entire life is brought into the context of the divine life. *Trinity*

concludes the chapter by presenting the context and the extent of its study.

In the second chapter, “The God We Worship,” *Trinity* considers 2 Corinthians 13:14 and explains that the text “introduces the knowledge of who God is through relaying how God relates to his creatures” (34), which in turn prompts a reflection on two critical truths: the first, that it is God “who reaches out to humanity to enable our worship” (34); and the second, that “the knowledge of *who* God is...comes to us through the experience of *how* God relates to us” (35). *Trinity* notes Karl Rahner’s axiom, “The ‘economic’ trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity” (35), for further discussion in later chapters and explores 2 Corinthians 13:14 in sections concerning grace, love, and fellowship.

Trinity demonstrates, based on other portions of 1 and 2 Corinthians, that “grace moves both internally within God and externally to humanity” (39), highlighting the indivisible operation of God as Trinity in that first, “grace originates with the Father in the Son through the Spirit. Second, grace has come into the world in the ministry of the Son. Third, God’s grace is still coming into the world through the perfecting work of the Holy Spirit” (43). *Trinity* shows the same indivisibility of operations in regards to love—with love proceeding from the Father through the Son and the Spirit to creation—and also in regards to fellowship. It concludes this chapter by stating that the God whom we worship is, according to 2 Corinthians 13:14, the “one God, three persons” who comes in grace, from love, with fellowship (54) and that “to worship God correctly is to worship him as three-and-one with our whole mind, indeed with our whole being” (55).

In the third chapter, “The Only God,” *Trinity* examines Deuteronomy 6:4-9 as the root of Christian monotheism and looks at the development of this monotheism in a trinitarian direction. After presenting the historical context of these verses, *Trinity* analyzes verse 4 word by word, taking into account each Hebrew word and the scholarship around its translation, and leans toward an understanding of the verse that “leaves to the side any expectation that the nature of God is reducible to a mathematical property” (70). It proposes that these verses serve the purpose of conveying a devotional exclusivity. *Trinity* also considers the divergence between Jewish and early Christian beliefs about God. It portrays the progression towards a trinitarian monotheism among early Christians and highlights, through the voices of other scholars, the apostle Paul’s addressing of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 in 1 Corinthians 8:5-6. *Trinity* concludes the chapter by calling Western Christians to consider whether they have “sometimes used mathematics to inappropriately define God” (84).

In the fourth through sixth chapters—“God Interpreting God,” “The God Who Is,” and “Even as God,” respectively—*Trinity* examines the Gospel of John, giving particular attention to John 1:18; 16:14-15; and 17:21-22. It uses John 1:18 mainly as a starting point to address methods of exegetical interpretations employed since the Reformation and the Reformation’s effect on a trinitarian view of the Bible. *Trinity* argues that the firm denunciation of the contributions of patristic exegesis during the Enlightenment eventually brought into view a “conflict between verifiable history and revealed theology” (91). That conflict divided scholars into two categories: those who accepted that the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit and those who did not, with the latter being left only with the history behind the text of the Scriptures. Thus, *Trinity* argues for a reclamation of patristic exegesis in a way that balances the Enlightenment rejection. Then it introduces the patristic distinctions between theology and economy as themes that govern the remainder of its discussion.

In the fifth chapter *Trinity* studies John 16:14-15 and demonstrates how patristic interpretation not only reveals the Trinity in John’s Gospel but also adequately conveys the thought in that Gospel. It explains that since John’s Gospel begins with theology and proceeds to economy, God in Himself may momentarily be distinguished from God in His relationship with man (113). Thus, it uses John 1:1 to present the distinctions and oneness of the Trinity in Himself and goes on to show, through John 1:14, the Word in relation to man. *Trinity* proposes that John’s Gospel portrays the eternal God in a threefold form by placing the Father, Son, and Spirit in “dynamic eternal relation to one another”—a form in which monarchy is ascribed to the Father, generation to the Son, and procession to the Spirit (121). Then through the words of the church fathers and their arguments for orthodoxy, *Trinity* presents the distinctions and union in the Trinity.

In the sixth chapter *Trinity* delineates trinitarian patterns in John’s Gospel through the apostle’s use of metaphors: first, God the Trinity is utterly separate above creation, based on John 1:1-3, 10; 6:63; 8:58; 17:5, 25 (140-141); second, God the Father is the source, continuance, and end of the trinitarian relations, based on prepositions used in John 8:42; 6:46; 7:29; 14:10; 16:12-14, etc. (142); third, God is one, and His unity extends unhindered to the Son and the Spirit, as exhibited in John 10:30, 38; 15:26 (143-144); and fourth and fifth, the distinctions between the Father, Son, and Spirit are real and

relational (144-145). *Trinity* concludes the chapter by itemizing concerns with the use of terms such as *substance* and *person* in the theological sphere and its choice in the usage of such terms.

In its seventh chapter, “The God Who Acts,” *Trinity* evaluates Paul’s presentation of the divine economy in the first chapter of Ephesians in order to present what it says about God. It begins the evaluation by presenting a more thorough analysis of and response to Rahner’s axiom concerning the Trinity. *Trinity* suggests that in a strict reading of Rahner’s axiom, “there remains no distinction... between divine content and divine form” (165). It explains that whereas “Rahner focused on the first part of his thesis, that the Bible’s revelation of the economic Trinity...truly reveals the immanent Trinity, he did not address whether the economic Trinity might also structure the immanent Trinity” (167). After addressing the various readings and interpretations of that axiom, *Trinity* offers a modified version: “*The economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity truly but not exhaustively*” (173), meaning that whereas “God’s revelation of himself as Trinity—in a source, generation, and procession τὸξίς—indicates who he really is,” this does not “tell us everything about God,” nor does it “allow for contradictory speculation” (174).

TRINITY INTRODUCES THE TRUTH
OF THE INSEPARABLE WORK OF
THE TRINITY IN THE WORKS
OF THE TRINITY: “EVERY WORK OF
GOD IS INSEPARABLY...A WORK
OF ALL THREE PERSONS.”

Based on this modification of Rahner’s axiom, *Trinity* examines Ephesians and notes that Paul’s theology presents itself in an economic trinitarian form that encourages a trinitarian ordering in which God is seen as the blessed One coming to humanity and bringing humanity back to Himself. *Trinity* explains that in Ephesians 1 “God the Father is the originating subject of the blessing; the Lord Jesus Christ is the active eternal agent that brings the blessing into history...and the Holy Spirit is the blessing made continually present to humanity” (189) and that Ephesians 2:18 shows the ascent of humanity to God. At this juncture *Trinity* introduces the truth of the inseparable work of the Trinity in the appropriated or proper works of the Trinity: “Every work of God is inseparably...a work of all three persons... Yet...each divine person takes a lead in the unified activity of God through works appropriated or properly attached to that particular divine person” (190-191). *Trinity* closes the chapter by noting other attributes of God in Ephesians that bridge eternity and history, theology and economy.

In the final chapter, “The God Who Is Coming,” *Trinity* explores the book of Revelation’s portrayal of God as

Trinity. It notes that the Trinity as revealed in this book is the consummate Trinity because it portrays the Trinity at the end of time. *Trinity* points out that several passages in Revelation show the Trinity working together and that others show the three existing together; thus, these passages provide a sustainable basis for a hypostatic understanding of the Trinity. After a brief introduction to Revelation and its salutation, *Trinity* rightly identifies the One who sits on the throne, the Lamb, and the seven Spirits as the three of the Divine Trinity. It observes that the seven Spirits should refer to the Spirit, because they are identified with God (3:1; 4:5; 5:6), described with indications of divine attributes, and placed not only before the throne of God but also as part of the Lamb. It argues that the scene in Revelation 4 and 5 suggests that “there is eternal subordination in John’s portrayal of the three” and that there is “eternal equality in John’s portrayal of the three” (217). *Trinity* progresses through the remainder of its final chapter by showing the participation of the three in any one activity for the carrying out of the divine works of redemption, judgment, and renewal as presented in Revelation. It concludes, “God the Trinity’s apocalyptic ministry of redemption, judgment, and renewal indicates the *indivisible operations* of all three persons of the Trinity... Yet...we have seen that each person leads in various activities” (225-226).

In its epilogue to the entire study, *Trinity* itemizes ten concerns in three categories—trinitarian reality, trinitarian hermeneutics, and trinitarian economy—to present a theological extract of its study, what its arguments would mean both for the common believer and the theologian, and areas where the study can be developed.

Presenting the Trinity as Inherent to the Scriptures

Trinity not only faithfully depicts what we know to be true of God—that He is a Trinity—but also does so while showing that such an understanding of God is inherent in the Scriptures. It accomplishes this task by taking an approach to the Scriptures that is in line with that of the church fathers, an immersive exegetical approach rather than a propositional one. Hence, it is able to demonstrate from select passages that God is three-one, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit mutually and eternally coinhering, coexisting, being inseparable, and working together as one. It shows from the record in the Gospels that the threefold relation that exists in the simple unity of God is shaped by identity and distinction, and it rightly notes that whereas such identity is perceived through the common possession of name, life, lordship, and other divine attributes and the common operation of the three, the distinctions are perceived through the diverse speeches, actions, and relations as expressed in the biblical authors’ use of words and prepositions.

Trinity also explains that whether or not insight into the Scriptures could be gained depends on one’s approach. Indeed, if a reader sought only propositional statements concerning God as Trinity in the Bible, he would be left with little. However, immersion in the text of the Scriptures under the enlightening of the Spirit will reveal that the Bible is laden with trinitarian patterns and revelation indicative of God being Trinity. Hence, *Trinity* rightfully advocates an approach that “requires the graces of both *logos* and *pneuma*” (ix). Toward a proper approach to understanding the Scriptures, *Trinity* offers a genuine contribution not only in identifying the shortcomings of modern approaches to the study of the Bible but also in providing some remedies by looking at how the church fathers studied the Scriptures and discovered the Trinity.

Distinguishing Theology from Economy

In its discussion of the relationship of the immanent Trinity to the economical Trinity, *Trinity* is commendable in that it not only identifies the major concerns surrounding the knowledge of God and such knowledge of Him through His revelation in His economy but also brings into conversation the defining voices on the subject matter and the various reactions to those voices. *Trinity* identifies points worthy of consideration in its evaluation of Rahner’s axiom, and presents an adaptation and modification based on its categorization of various readings and reactions to that axiom. For instance, it argues along with others that a “strict” reading of Rahner’s axiom—such that there is no greater mystery to God beyond His relationship with man in His economy—may lead to making God’s triune nature dependent on and subject to His relationship with man (168).

Identifying the Trinity in Revelation

A noteworthy aspect of *Trinity*’s study is that its consideration of the Trinity is not limited to the Old Testament, the Gospels, or the Epistles; rather, it extends its study through to the book of Revelation. Moreover, *Trinity* precisely identifies the Trinity in Revelation. In particular, it correctly recognizes the seven Spirits of God as the Holy Spirit. In addition, it draws from F. F. Bruce’s study of the Spirit in Revelation, suggesting that the fact that “seven” Spirits are used to represent the one Spirit may indicate the sevenfold working of the one God, as is similarly indicated with the lampstand in Zechariah 4.

Some Weaknesses

In the course of its presentation of the Trinity in the Bible, *Trinity* does display some weaknesses. Perhaps the most glaring of them is a lack of awareness or acknowledgment

of other authors who have taken a similar position concerning the Trinity in the Scriptures and have developed its implications in terms of the believers' personal salvation and God's eternal plan. Witness Lee, for example, in *God's New Testament Economy* and *Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John*, published by Living Stream Ministry, thoroughly details the revelation of the Triune God in the Scriptures, His operating in His Trinity to save the believers, and the believers' experience of such a salvation through to its consummation in a mutual indwelling of the Triune God with the tripartite man as the New Jerusalem for eternity.

Conclusion

Trinity exhibits some weaknesses, yet they pertain mostly to items that do not detract from its goals of presenting the Trinity as the idiom of the Scriptures and of initiating a conversation regarding the limitations in modern approaches to the study of the Bible. In this sense, *Trinity* faithfully and accurately portrays the Trinity as revealed in the Scriptures and inspires a consideration of the implications of the Trinity for the believers' salvation.

by Joel Oladele

THE SAVING OPERATION
OF THE TRINITY WILL
CONSUMMATE IN A MUTUAL
INDWELLING OF THE TRIUNE GOD
WITH THE TRIPARTITE MAN
AS THE NEW JERUSALEM.

Not Seeing the Body of Christ as the Central Point in Romans

Glory in Romans and the Unified Purpose of God in Redemptive History, by Donald L. Berry. Pickwick Publications, 2016.

Glory in Romans and the Unified Purpose of God in Redemptive History (hereafter, *Glory*) professes to be among the books and ministry at the resurgence of biblical theology, a field that seeks to understand the “overarching narrative of the Bible” (2). Following the books of this type, *Glory* focuses on the motif of glory in Paul's Epistle to the Romans as it specifically relates to humanity. *Glory* traces the apostle's intent and meaning in its discourse on a Christian's hope of and participation in future glory, not only within Romans but also within the Pauline corpus and throughout the biblical context, particularly the Old Testament. Using this methodology, *Glory* posits that “Paul conceives of the believer's eschatological glory as the fulfillment of God's purposes in both creation and

redemption as seen in the Old Testament” (9). Mar- shalling the support of various key theologians and har- nessing both the denotations and connotations of the Greek and Hebrew, *Glory's* study admirably expounds “Paul's conception of glory (δόξα),” the heart of which concerns “God manifesting his nature and character in all of creation through image-bearers who share in and reflect his glory” (5). *Glory* is refreshingly insightful, given the breadth of the scriptural portions covered; however, it fails to properly place the subject of glory within the context of the Body of Christ, a uniquely Pauline revelation that is not only central in Romans, thereby constituting the main context for all truths revealed in the book, but also essential in the Pauline corpus. This failure is due to a deficient understanding of the profundity of the law of the Spirit of life in God's complete salvation.

Glory Being the Expression of God's Nature and Character through Humanity as His Image-bearers

Romans 1:23 says, “[They] changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man and of birds and of four-footed animals and reptiles.” *Glory* suggests that Romans 1:18-25 provides “a framework for understanding the later uses of δόξα in the letter [to the Romans]” (13) and that verse 23, in particular, points to the

“loss of human glory” (30), the glory of God that He intended humanity to share and reflect. *Glory* argues that in exchanging the worship of God for idol worship, man exchanged the glory of God, no longer reflecting the glory that they were intended to have but rather becoming one with the object of their idolatry and even becoming subject to the very creation that man was intended to rule over (17-18). By comparing verse 20 and Colossians 1:15, we can see that God, who is invisible, intends to make Himself known through the man whom He created in His image. As the Firstborn of all creation, God's Son takes the lead to reveal, to make visible, the nature, the character, and, therefore, the glory of the invisible God. *Glory* further supports this notion by interpreting God being made known in Romans 1:19 as not merely “among” humanity but from within humanity as the “locus where God's self-revelation was to be seen” (22). The relationship between Romans 1:18-25 and 8:17-30 further show that Genesis 1 through 3 is the backdrop of Romans 1:18-25 and that the restoration of humanity to its created purpose will be through its future hope of glory. In the larger context of Paul's writings, *Glory* suggests that the apostle closely, and even interchangeably, associates

doxa (glory) with *ikon* (image) (26-28). This demonstrates Paul's understanding of Genesis 1—that the purpose of the creation of man is to display God as His image bearer.

Seeking Glory

Romans 2:7 says, "To those who by endurance in good work seek glory and honor and incorruptibility, life eternal." Verse 10 says, "But glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and to Greek." *Glory* indicates that in these verses Paul plants the seeds that the new covenant believers are the fulfillment of those who persevere in good works and seek glory, honor, and incorruptibility (39-41). Fallen men, who have exchanged the glory of God and have given themselves to corruptibility and the debasement of sin, are unable to truly manifest good works.

In order to preserve the goal of producing image-bearers of His glory through His elect, God gave the law to Israel (vv. 17-24). The law "embodies the truth about God's character and nature"; hence, those who keep the law would "display his glory by reflecting what is true about God in their lives" (46). Just as Adam failed in partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Israel failed also in not keeping the law. Based on this, *Glory* argues that those who can persevere in good works are those who have the works of the law written on their hearts (v. 15), those who have had the circumcision of the heart (v. 29), which is carried out by the Spirit in their spirit (43-44). Only the work of God's Spirit in the hearts of the new covenant believers can produce the righteousness that can persevere in good works, which are worthy of the future hope of eschatological glory.

Falling Short of Glory

Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In this verse the matter of glory factors centrally in Paul's indictment of all humanity. *Glory* notes the difficulty with understanding Paul's sense of the phrase *glory of God* and resolves that its interpretation can be found within the context of Romans itself (50-51). All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God because all are in Adam, who represents the "old humanity," that which is subject to condemnation and death. The contrast to this what is stated in 5:15-18—that all who are in Christ are "given justification and life" (52). Thus, for one to fall short of God's glory is to fail to play a vital part in the "larger divine purpose"—to "reflect the glory of God by putting the worth and truth of God's person and nature on display" (53). The "essence of sin," therefore, is the "failure to value God's glory supremely and to live in accord with his glory" (53).

Boasting because of the Hope of Glory

Romans 5:1-2 says, "Therefore having been justified out of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we boast because of the hope of the glory of God." In contrast to the loss of glory in Romans 1 through 3, *Glory* asserts that in Romans chapters 5 through 8 Paul reassures the believers that they shall "once again share in God's glory intended for humanity" (69). As in Romans 3:23, the phrase *glory of God* in 5:2 refers to God's nature and character as His glory, which "believers will again share in and display as the fulfillment of God's intention for humanity" (72). Our assurance of a future hope—one of sharing and reflecting God's glory—is predicated on the restored relationship with God through our being justified out of faith (v. 1). It is by His justification of us that we have peace toward God, have access into grace, and can boast because of the glory of God. Glory, however, is not conferred upon believers merely by virtue of their justification. Having been justified, believers proceed to undergo a lifetime of "moral transformation" brought about circumstantially by the many sufferings and afflictions in their life (78). By such an inner process assisted by outward circumstances, "God's character and nature are being imprinted on their lives" (78), thereby qualifying the believers eschatologically to the full share of God's glory. Crucially, all believers are united by faith to Christ, the last Adam and the true Israel, in whom man is fully restored to the divinely created purpose of sharing God's glory and ruling over God's creation as His representative and in whom the consequences of Adam's disobedience are fully reversed (83-84). Thus, believers will ultimately fulfill Adam's destiny of reflecting and representing God by virtue of their being in Christ.

The Glory of the Father

Romans 6:4 speaks of the "glory of the Father." *Glory* asserts that Paul in 6:4 "portrays a transforming work leading to 'newness of life' that is a present reality for believers" (95). This transformation through the "agency of the Spirit" and expressed as righteousness will be consummated in the believers' "full share in the glory of Christ at their resurrection" (95). This implies that "there is a continuity between the present newness of life given to believers and their future glorified existence" (94).

Romans 8:17-18 says,

If children, heirs also; on the one hand, heirs of God; on the other, joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not

worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed upon us.

Glory emphasizes that the peak of the glory theme in Romans is found in chapter 8 (160). Set in direct contrast to the abject failure of our being in Adam, under the law, and unable to live a life worthy of the glory intended for humanity, Romans 8 demonstrates that by being in Christ by the Spirit, we become the co-heirs, even the co-glorified, with Christ. The moral law cannot produce a righteous living, due to the weakness of the flesh; the law is unable to produce righteousness or to give life. However, righteousness and life are the two “defining marks of the Spirit in the new covenant” (109). *Glory* indicates that “in 8:1-13 Paul highlights the role of the Spirit in producing righteousness and giving resurrection life” (110).

According to *Glory*, in 8:17-18 we can see that those in Christ are co-heirs with Him as recipients of God’s promises to Abraham and Israel (115). Simultaneously, as those of the new covenant, the believers inherit the good land; this inheritance has been universalized to include the whole earth, which was promised to Adam at his creation for his dominion. Christ is the Heir and fulfillment of all of God’s promises and purposes for Adam and Israel, and we believers participate in His glory by being “in Christ,” which entails our being conformed to His image. This pathway to glorification is taken by those who also share in His sufferings. Our present afflictions are the condition for glorification, for through them the Spirit produces the “perseverance and tested character that are the precursors to final, eschatological glory” (123). *Glory* is careful to clarify that the works themselves are not the “wages” for future glory as a reward; good works are the “fruit of God’s justifying grace and of the new covenant work of the Spirit” (123). “Suffering, then, prepares believers to reign over creation as God intended by producing in them the kind of character needed to reflect God’s kingship” (124).

The Freedom of the Glory

Romans 8:21 says, “In hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” *Glory* indicates that just as Paul correlates inheritance with glorification in 8:17, so in verse 19 he associates glory with our being sons (126). In our bodily resurrection, which is simultaneously our glorification, we will be

revealed as the sons of God. Through the revelation of the sons of God a “cosmic renewal” (125) will be brought forth, a revelation that all creation has been longing for. A significant feature of the cosmic renewal will be the reigning in life of the sons of God, who will be raised in glory through resurrection to be fitted with “incorruptible bodies of glory” befitting our role as “God’s royal representatives” (128). *Glory* contends that the future resurrection of the sons of God in glory will reverse the reign of death resulting from Adam’s sin and restore the God-given authority of the “image-bearing servant kings” (128). At our glorification as the sons of God, we will be restored to our place of dominion not only over creation but also over all enemies, including death (130).

Glory goes on to show that creation will be set free from the bondage of sin and death when the children of God are glorified and restored to their rightful position of dominion over the renewed creation. The fall not only subjugated humankind to death and corruption but even inflicted the same on creation. For this reason, creation groans, longs for, and awaits the revelation of the glorified sons of God in anticipation of its own freedom from the dominion of death, futility, and corruption brought about by man’s disobedience.

ACCORDING TO *GLORY*, “TO BE FULLY CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF THE SON IS TO BE GLORIFIED; AND TO BE GLORIFIED IS TO BE LIKE THE SON, SHARING IN HIS IMAGE AND ALL THAT CHARACTERIZES HIM.”

Those Who Are Glorified

Romans 8:30 says, “Those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.” *Glory* equates the believers’ being conformed to the image of God’s Son in verse 29 with glorification in verse 30. According to *Glory*, “to be fully conformed to the image of the Son is to be glorified; and to be glorified is to be like the Son, sharing in his image and all that characterizes him” (141).

Glory then proceeds to delineate four facets of this image-bearing glory. The first facet of the glory intended for believers is to share in the “inward, ethical glory” (143). *Glory* demonstrates that the μορφή word group, which includes *transformation* and *conformation*, is consistently associated with the image of Jesus (144). In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul relates this word group with δόξα, showing the way that believers are transformed from what *Glory* considers to be one level of inward, ethical glory to another. *Glory* then links this thought of an inward, ethical renewal to 4:16 as well as to Romans 12:2. *Glory* states, “To be glorified this way is to be transformed inwardly and ontologically, so that believers

are of like mind and like heart with God” (145). The second facet is “outward, physical glory” (146). *Glory* shows that the same ontological change within a believer has an outward, physical manifestation: “Glory also consists of ontological likeness to Christ in one’s physical existence” (146). *Glory* draws from Philippians 3:21, which unveils that the body of the believers will be conformed to the body of Christ in resurrection, which is a body characterized by glory. At their glorification, the body of the believers will be raised in incorruptibility (1 Cor. 15:42-43). The third facet of the glory in Romans 8 is “functional glory” (147), meaning that the believers will reign with Christ as those who bear His image and as His co-kings and co-heirs of glory. *Glory* argues that there is a functional aspect to being conformed to Christ’s image and sharing in Christ’s glory (147-148) and that this aspect serves to underscore the preeminence of the Son as God’s ultimate design (v. 29). God’s grand purpose is Christ’s preeminence in all things, and our “conformity to his image and co-reign with him causes his unique glory and greatness to be more clearly displayed and celebrated” (151). The final facet is “relational glory” (153), so named by *Glory* to highlight the familial language prevalent in Romans 8—*sons* (vv. 14, 23), *Father* (v. 15), *children* (vv. 16, 21), *heirs* (v. 17), *firstborn* (v. 29), and *brothers* (v. 29). *Glory* indicates that by glorifying His many sons, God is bringing forth the final restoration of His being the Father in His relationship with the believers. This is a relationship of love, filled with joy and delight, and it is a relationship of the unhindered fellowship that the Son enjoys with the Father.

The Glory

Romans 9:3-4 says, “My kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, whose are the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service and the promises.” *Glory* wrestles with how to understand *the glory* (with a definite article) in verse 4 and what constitutes Israel in Romans 9. Based on strong comparative evidence both in Old Testament promises and the context of Romans itself, *Glory* provides good reason to interpret “the glory” in verse 4 as “the glory Israel was intended to share in and display to the nations” (164). However, since this glory cannot be shared or manifested by ethnic Israel due to their sin and rejection of the Messiah, this glory has become the hope of eschatological glory to the true Israel, that is, to God’s elect today, the Christians, those who are circumcised in heart and who are the spiritual seeds of Abraham, those who believed God’s promises and are counted righteous (vv. 4-8; 4:1-16). The church today is composed of the true people of God—whether they be Jewish or Gentile; these believers are therefore the recipients of Israel’s promised blessings.

Prepared Beforehand unto Glory

Romans 9:23 says, “In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand unto glory.” *Glory* explains that the two occurrences of *glory* in verse 23 solidify the same thought—that glory describes all that God is by nature (169). Thus, in keeping with this overarching interpretation of glory in this study, *Glory* argues that *the riches of His glory* is “Paul’s way of describing the beauty and goodness of who God is and what belongs to him by nature—his character, his essence, his divine life and limitless supply of kindness and mercy and wisdom and power and provision” (170).

The Body of Christ—the Focal Point of Romans

The subject of Romans is the full gospel of God, which is to make sinners into sons of God so that they may be constituted as the Body of Christ, expressed as local churches. Although *Glory* presents a penetratingly astute and refreshingly perceptive study of the glory motif in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans by enlarging its comparative context to include the Pauline corpus as well as the entire Bible, *Glory* fails to match or even feature the apostle’s primary emphasis and the goal of the divine revelation in this Epistle—the Body of Christ. In its analysis of Romans 12:1—15:13, *Glory* claims that Paul emphasizes how the present life of the body (which *Glory* defines as the “totality of one’s being” (179) individually and corporately is a living in accord with the “ethical instructions” in these chapters (177). It is telling that *Glory* states,

Paul’s opening exhortation in 12:1-2 serves as the paradigm for the entire ethical section. All of his instructions in 12:3—15:13 are subsumed under this opening appeal to “present your bodies as living sacrifices...to God” and to “not be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” (177)

This statement throws a negative light on the extent to which *Glory* understands the believers’ organic participation in the divine glory. To relegate chapters 12 through 15 to being an “ethical section” belies *Glory*’s lack of understanding concerning the depth of God’s full salvation, a salvation that was accomplished by Christ and is applied by the Spirit, as detailed in Romans 8. Contrary to *Glory*’s assertion, the paradigm that Paul begins to emphasize in Romans 12 is the will of God in verse 2. The believers’ presenting their bodies and being transformed by the renewing of their minds are to prove that God’s good, well pleasing, and perfect will is the reality of the Body of Christ, which Paul begins to unveil and elaborate on in verses 4 and 5. That *Glory* misses this crucial point of revelation—one found in all of Paul’s Epistles—exposes

a lack of depth in its understanding of the believers' experience of being in Christ in Romans 8.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

Glory maintains that through inward renewal, believers share a "likeness to God" as a "preview of the full glory to come when the sin which characterizes life in this age has been eradicated and believers know the unhindered joy of being God-like in thought, in desire, and in deed" (145). This thought of being like God coincides with *Glory's* assertion that the ontological facet of glory is "inward" and "ethical" (143). Paul's thought, especially in Romans 8, is much deeper and more intrinsic. In verse 29 Paul unveils the complete salvation of God, including the steps of the judicial redemption based on righteousness (1:16-17; 3:21-26, 28; 4:24-25; 5:1-2, 9-21; 9:30-31) and of the organic salvation executed by the divine life (1:17; 5:10, 17-18, 21). The result of God's full salvation is not believers who are merely like God; it is believers who are God in life and nature (but not in the Godhead), reproductions of the firstborn Son of God, which speaks of the goal of God's full salvation—God's corporate expression as the Body of Christ. Witness Lee writes,

With His firstborn Son as the base, pattern, element, and means, God is producing many sons, and the many sons who are produced are the many believers who believe into God's firstborn Son and are joined to Him as one. They are exactly like Him in life and nature, and, like Him, they have both humanity and divinity. They are His increase and expression in order that they may express the eternal Triune God for eternity. (Recovery Version, Roman 8:29, note 4)

Romans 8 is the most crucial chapter in this Epistle because this chapter reveals the believers' experience of the Triune God as life for His corporate expression as the Body of Christ. Verse 2 contains the key thought: "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Here Paul presents the consummation of Christ's passing through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection—His becoming the indwelling life-giving Spirit (v. 11; 1 Cor. 15:45). As the Spirit who gives life, Christ is the life of the redeemed through their faith in Him (Rom. 1:17). Every kind of life has its organic law, its spontaneous and automatic power. Hence, the law of the Spirit of life is the spontaneous and automatic power working in the believers for them to fulfill all the righteous requirements of God and thereby glorify God.

Participating in the organic law of the Spirit of life differs from merely following a set of "ethical instructions" (177) in an effort to outwardly express an "inward, ethical likeness to God" (179) in the physical world. The Spirit of life dispenses the divine life into the believers' spirit (8:10), soul (v. 6), and body (v. 11) in order to enable and effect a spontaneous and automatic God-glorifying living, provided that the believers render cooperation to the divine Spirit in their human spirit. By continually walking according to their spirit (v. 4), minding the things of the Spirit (v. 5), setting their minds on the spirit (v. 6), and being led by the Spirit (v. 14), the believers grow in the divine life. Consequently, they grow from being children, which they are through regeneration by the divine life (v. 16), to being sons, who are more advanced in growth through transformation by the divine life (v. 14), and eventually to being heirs, who are fully matured through suffering and thus qualified to receive their full inheritance, their glorification (v. 17). From the perspective of God's organic salvation, as the divine life spreads from their regenerated spirit into their soul, the believers are transformed by the renewing of their mind (12:2). Transformation, which denotes a metabolic change, leads to conformation, which is the shaping into the specific image of the firstborn Son of God (8:29).

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The believers' glorification, therefore, is the culmination of a lifetime of the believers'

experiencing transformation and conformation through their enjoyment of the continual impartation of the divine life into their soul (v. 30). By their participation in God's salvation in life, the believers are saved to such an extent that they are not merely of "like mind and like heart with God" (145) but have, in Christ, become God in His life, nature, function, and expression but not in the Godhead or as an object of worship. Thus, whatever they do and say in service and worship is spontaneously the organic extension and expression of the firstborn Son who lives in them as the life-giving Spirit. They are progressively transformed into the image of the resurrected and glorified Christ from one degree of glory to another, until the essence of who they are in Christ in their inward parts can be matched and consummated only by the redemption of their bodies, the eschatological glorification of their entire being (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:17-18, 23, 30; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 2:10).

The Body of Christ as the Corporate Expression of the Triune God

Glory's underappreciation of the depth and extent of

God's complete salvation in Romans 8 further compromises its interpretation of Paul's thought in Romans 12. *Glory* specifies that in Romans 12 through 15 Paul is exhorting believers to worship in a corporate way in the one Body of Christ by maintaining solidarity not only with Christ but also with one another through "mutual acceptance and fellowship" (186), living "together in harmony," with the same mind, welcoming one another (187), and bearing with one another (189). Taking as its premise the notion that our physical bodies bear the "imprint of God's essence and character" (190) and that the image of Christ serves as the "example and model to be imitated" (187), *Glory* surmises that all who are incorporated into Christ become "his body—the locus of the revelation of his glory to the world" (190). *Glory's* interpretation of Romans 12 through 15 is a regression even from the erroneous view of the Body of Christ as a metaphor, because such an interpretation reduces the significance of the life of the Body of Christ to that of exhibiting an ethical living in the physical world as a group of believers in Christ. Paul's deep thought in Romans concerning the Body of Christ is neither a metaphor to denote our solidarity with Christ and with other believers nor a bodily display of Christ-like behavior. This is not the case in the present age, and neither will it be in the coming age.

The Body of Christ, a uniquely Pauline revelation in the New Testament because of the vision that Paul received at his conversion and that he continued to see, is a reality and mode of existence for Christ and His believers, who have been organically joined to Him. In Romans 11:17 Paul (in what can be correctly considered a metaphor) speaks of the grafting of the branch of a wild olive tree into the cultivated olive tree. Strictly speaking, in this verse Paul is referring to the Gentiles being grafted into Israel for them to become fellow partakers of the "fatness," which refers to Christ, and of "the root," which refers to the unsearchable riches of God in Christ (cf. Eph. 3:8). Nevertheless, through the metaphor of grafting, Paul is depicting "the uniting of two lives as one so that they may share one mingled life and one living" (Lee, Recovery Version, Rom. 11:17, note 1). Hence, it is crucial to see that believers should not each live a "member life," that is, a life in which an individual believer lives a Christ-manifesting life that is separate from one another; instead, all the believers should live one life and share one living in and as the Body of Christ, with Christ as the Head (Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 4:4, 15-16; 1 Cor. 12:12-13).

The Body of Christ is a mystical reality and is practically expressed in and as the local churches (Rom. 16). Living in the Body of Christ is made possible by sinners being redeemed, justified, reconciled, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified, resulting in their becoming the many sons of God who are a

corporate reproduction in the life and nature of the firstborn Son of God (1:3-4; 3:24; 5:10; 8:14, 29-30; 12:2, 4-5). *Glory* claims that in Romans 8 Paul reached the "summit of his glory motif" (160); however, the divine revelation continues to ascend to the goal of God's salvation and the purpose of glorification in Romans 12. According to the progression of the divine revelation in Romans, Paul's unveiling of the Body of Christ in Romans 12 is a continuation of his discussion of the operation of the law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8. This law is producing the many sons of God as the reproduction of the firstborn Son of God, and the many sons are simultaneously the many members of the Body of Christ (v. 29; 12:4-5). The Body of Christ is the good, well pleasing, and perfect will of God, to which all believers should present their entire tripartite being (vv. 1-2, 11). If they do so, Christians will live the Body life in the present age as Paul describes in Romans 12 through 15, which description is not a set of ethical instructions but a delineation of the believers' spontaneous Christ-expressing living under the infusion of the divine life and in cooperation with the law of the Spirit of life for their daily transformation from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

By not presenting the Body of Christ as the intrinsic goal of God's salvation in the book of Romans, *Glory's* presentation of glory is bereft of the divine purpose and consigns much of the believers' experience to the future. This omission is all the more glaring in the context of a book that purports to present the theme of glory, because it ignores Paul's association of the Body of Christ, the church, with glory in his other Epistles, notably Ephesians. In that Epistle he speaks of the church, which is Christ's Body (1:22-23), and then later speaks of there being glory in the church (3:21) and of Christ's desire to present the church to Himself glorious (5:27). God's determined will, which He forged with an eternal purpose according to His good pleasure, is to have a corporate man to express Him in His image and to represent Him with His authority (Gen. 1:26; Eph. 1:5, 9-11; 3:11; Rev. 4:11). This is the ultimate purpose of God's full salvation of sinners and the goal of the divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures. *Glory* falls short of unveiling that the Body of Christ is a reality in the present age and is the glorious corporate expression of God that fulfills His eternal purpose. Consequently, *Glory* misses the crucial revelation in Romans that God is ultimately glorified by the Body of Christ.

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