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Shema, Shabbat, Shalom, and a Savior: Implications for Pastoral Ministry

Richard Hovey
rhovey15@georgefox.edu

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

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RICHARD HOVEY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Richard Hovey

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Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: Michael Gama, DMin

Secondary Advisor: Bob Henry, DMin

Lead Mentor: MaryKate Morse, PhD

DEDICATION

In the process of writing my dissertation, there are many who stood by me and supported me, including a close friend, Dale Empey. Dale shared my passion for the church and ministry. In October of 2017, our Lord God called Dale home following a battle with cancer.

Dale, you not only encouraged me in the writing of my dissertation, but you were a confidant and partner in ministry, and a friend above all else. I am unsure as to why at this time our Lord and mutual Friend called you home to be with him. Aelred of Rievaulx once wrote: “Here we are, you and I, and I hope that Christ makes a third with us.” We know he did, my friend, we know he did! For this I thank him, and thank you – that our friendship was all the more sweet because it was a spiritual friendship. In due time I will seek another; in the mean time the presence of Christ’s Spirit continues to tarry here as you now tarry there. I dedicate this dissertation to you, Dale, in memory of your dedication to me not only as your pastor but as your friend.

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ABSTRACT

In the Global North there are disparaging figures within evangelicalism for both pastors and the churches they lead. Evangelical pastors have lost their moorings, suffering the consequences of a lost call and purpose in ministry. This has lead to an abandonment of post by the contemporary evangelical pastor in North America, and to a church left to drift in a secular sea. This project will suggest an answer in the return to a true pastoral ministry which will have positive implications for both pastor and church.

Chapter 1 will provide an overview of the problem within contemporary evangelical pastoral ministry. This chapter will outline the intrapersonal disconnect that occurs within the pastor's personal life and vocational calling as well as the interpersonal disconnect between pastor and church body when it comes to calling and purpose. In Chapter 2, the role of leadership within the biblical texts will be outlined, looking at the shepherd leadership expectations within the Old Testament and how these are continued in the New Testament. The themes of Shema, Shabbat and Shalom will be introduced in this chapter, looking at their fulfilment in the Shepherd ministry of Jesus. Chapter 3 will look at the historical development of the pastoral role, review the pastoral role in the classical tradition, with a call to return to the concept of shepherd ministry.

Then in Chapter 4, the concepts of Shema, Shabbat, and Shalom shall be addressed in correlation with the contemporary pastor. This shall be followed by, in Chapter 5, providing the context within which the pastor finds him or herself – that of the contemporary evangelicalism and the challenges facing the church. Chapter 6 shall provide a concluding argument inviting the evangelical pastor to return to the profound faith which is part of the evangelical tradition.

CHAPTER 1:

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

> Before the altar of God, at the bedside of the sick, in conversation with troubled souls, befuddled before the biblical text, there is the pastor. Standing in that fateful intersection between God's people and God, at that risky intersection between Christ and his Body, the church, stands the priests. It is no small thing to be in mediation between God and humanity, to offer the gifts of God's people, to intercede for the suffering of the world in prayer, rightly to divide the Word of God. With trembling and with joy, the pastor works that fateful space between here and the throne of God.[1]

There are some who have argued that the pastoral position has lost its' purpose in contemporary society in the Global North, perhaps coupled with the loss of purpose for the church in the Global North. It shall be argued, however, that this is not the case; rather, the pastoral role and the purpose of the church are found to be on the cusp of a new world and a world since passed. The success of the church at this point will depend in part on the revived call of those who stand at this intersection between Christ and his body, with a clarification based upon the biblical text as to what the role of one in such a position is. The 21st century evangelical pastor must once again realize, in theory and practice, the call placed upon his/her life.

Eugene Peterson, early on in his career as an evangelical pastor, found himself facing what he termed a wide chasm. He shared the experience in one of his many books, stating that he felt his identification as a Christian in life would converge with his vocational identification as a pastor – his work becoming an extension of his faith, "vocation serving as paving to make the faith accessible for others who wished to travel

[1] William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 11.

this road."[2] A gap appeared in Peterson's life, however, which stopped him in his tracks. No matter what he tried, from reading books to attending workshops, he found no solutions to bridging the gap which widened between his personal faith and pastoral vocation. Gradually, the realization came that the chasm Peterson was facing was not *before* him but rather *within* him. The bridge needing to be built was within the wasteland of his own soul, in "the interior territory where the split had originated."[3] Peterson found in this split, his life as a Christian was at odds with his vocation as a pastor, and his vocation as a pastor was often getting in the way of his living as a Christian.[4]

Unfortunately, Peterson is not the only pastor who has faced this chasm. Peterson goes on to note that, sadly, "many turn back, abandoning their ordained vocation for a religious job. . . The vocation to be a *pastor* . . . is essential in the revolutionary gospel work of inaugurating and practicing the kingdom of God. Every time one of our company abandons this essential and exacting work, the vocations of all of us are diminished."[5] Willimon states that "pastoral ministry is a gift of God to the church."[6] So how does the pastor fulfill his/her role well on this double cusp – standing between a new world and one recently passed while standing in the gap between Christ and his body? Perhaps the answer is in dealing well with what one could add as a third cusp, being that of the pastor's inward and outward life and how they intercede or diverge with one another.

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[2] Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 1.

[3] Ibid., 1-2.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 3.

[6] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 12.

This perhaps is the most important cusp of the three. Richard Foster suggests that "without interior transformation the movement up into God's glory would overwhelm us and the movement out into ministry would destroy us."[7]

It is important to recognize, however, that the reason pastors are turning back is larger than just this intrapersonal chasm; there is also an interpersonal chasm that they face. G. Lloyd Rediger, writing in 1997, saw the issue already in epidemic proportions. He writes: "Abuse of pastors by congregations and the breakdown of pastors due to inadequate support are now tragic realities. This worst-case scenario for the church, one that is increasing in epidemic proportions, is not a misinterpretation by a few discontented clergy. Rather, it is a phenomenon that is verified by both research and experience."[8] Pastors are fighting a battle within their own souls and within the communities they are called to serve. This means that even pastors who may not be facing as severe of an intrapersonal chasm are still at risk for discouragement and burnout. For those without a strong intrapersonal or spiritual foundation, discouragement and burnout are most certain. Or perhaps worse, the chasm between their personal and vocational calling becomes a staunch reality; in this space their ministry becomes no different than any other secular profession, "applying the same techniques and standards for success that the world applies. If their congregations gain spiritual strength, it will be in spite of their leadership rather than because of it."[9]

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[7] Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Hearts True Home* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 2000), 5.

[8] G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 1.

[9] Michael Gemignani, *Spiritual Formation for Pastors: Feeding the Fire Within* (Valley Forge, PA: 2002), 6-8.

Peterson, in *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, goes on to explain the context in which North American pastors find themselves and the affront this poses for change. He writes:

> The conditions in which we must acquire a spirituality for our vocation – an *interior* adequate to the *exterior* – are, it must be admitted, not friendly. Our vocations are bounded one side by consumer appetites, on the other by a marketing mind-set. Pastoral vocation is interpreted from the congregational side as the work of meeting people's religious needs on demand at the best possible price and from the clerical side as satisfying those same needs quickly and efficiently. These conditions quickly reduce the pastoral vocation to religious economics, pull it into relentless competitiveness, and deliver it into the hands of public relations and marketing experts.[10]

In his book, *The Unnecessary Pastor*, co-authored with Marva Dawn, Peterson notes that "congregations want pastors who will lead them in the world of religious competition and provide a safe alternative to the world's ways. They want pastors who *lead*." These congregations, the authors suggest, "get their idea of what makes a pastor from culture, not from the Scriptures: they want a winner; they want their needs met; they want to be a part of something zesty and glamourous."[11] This is a piece of the new world in which evangelical pastor finds themselves.

So, what is the way forward? The development of a sound, biblically informed pastoral theology is in need of being revisited, reaching back into a world past, answering the question of what it is that a pastor is called to in Scripture and how the 21st century pastor can find him or herself fulfilling that calling in the Global North. James W. Thompson, who educated pastors as a professor, noted within his own church tradition, the role of the pastor would change over time. He notes that in an earlier generation, "the

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[10] Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 3-4.

[11] Eugene Peterson and Marva Dawn, *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2000), 4.

ideal minister was the evangelist who was measured by his success in persuading large numbers of people to become Christians."[12] The next generation of parishioners shifted their expectations of their pastor "from outreach to nurturing the congregation and responding to the needs of the individuals."[13] In a more recent era, Thompson notes that "ministers learned the techniques of the therapist and placed considerable value on pastoral care and counselling." [14] William Willimon suggests that the pastor as therapist is one of the chief pastoral metaphors of this era, suggesting that "we live in a therapeutic culture."[15] Willimon goes on to explain:

> We want not so much to be saved or changed, but rather to feel better about ourselves…The preacher becomes not the teacher or the preacher or the moral guide, but rather the therapist who helps evoke spiritually-inclined sentiments in individuals – soothing anxiety, caring for the distressed, and healing the maladjusted. Certainly, the pastor is to care for people. But the pastor cares 'in the name of Christ', which may give a different cast and set different goals for the pastor's care than for that of a secular therapist. What the Christian faith might define as 'a well-functioning personality' might be considerably at odds with contemporary definitions of mental health… Lacking theological control on our 'care', we lapse into secular goals and techniques of care. We offer the church care that is not too different from that which might be received from any well-meaning therapist. The pastor is reduced to the level of the soother of anxieties brought on by the dilemmas of affluence rather than the caller of persons to salvation.[16]

Thompson suggests that in the present era "the minister is ultimately measured by the ability to organize, build and manage a complex organization" and "the ultimate goal

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[12] James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry according to Paul: A Biblical Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 8.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 8-9.

[15] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 56.

[16] Ibid., 56-60.

of the minister is to take the congregation to a new level of growth."[17] What is missing, notes Thompson, "in the conversation about (pastoral) ministry is a theologically coherent understanding of the purpose of ministry that incorporates the numerous roles of a minister."[18] Thomas Oden, in his *Pastoral Theology*, states that there has been "no systematic, scripturally grounded pastoral theology for an English speaking ecumenical audience since Washington Gladden's *The Christian Pastor* " which was published in 1898.[19]

Returning to the thought of the third cusp mentioned above, it is important to recognize at the onset the centrality of the pastor's heart in his/her work. Reggie McNeal states simply but as a matter of fact that *spiritual leadership is a work of heart* – he is concerned that this truth has escaped many who serve as spiritual leaders and who have become so busy taking care of the hearts of others that they have forgotten their own.[20] This neglect can be a significant contributing factor to the discouragement and devastation among those in pastoral ministry. While they may have been trained well in the contemporary emphasises which have shadowed the landscape of ministry training (from counselling to management to sermon preparation), the actual formation of the pastor's heart for ministry has been relegated to the sidelines. McNeal suggests one reason for this is that there has been an operating assumption that "spiritual leaders already understand spiritual formation and automatically apply these disciplines into their

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[17] Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry according to Paul*, 9.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1983), 9.

[20] Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), xi.

own lives… My years," continues McNeal, "in personal leadership in local congregations, and now my chance to work with thousands of church leaders across the United States and Canada in their own leadership development, convince me that these assumptions are wrong."[21] McNeal further concludes that "functionalism has replaced spiritual formation. Program manipulation and methodological prowess often serve as mere stopgap strategies to substitute for genuine spiritual leadership."[22]

An additional note at the beginning of this study into the pastoral role within 21st century evangelicalism in the Global North, is the recognition of the importance and place of the pastoral role in general. As noted at the beginning of this introduction, there have been some who have debunked the need for "pastors" in the contemporary vocational sense, calling into question the very validity of the idea (as least in relation to what it has become). Frank Viola and George Barna, in *Pagan Christianity?*, boldly state that "there is not a single verse in the entire New Testament that supports the existence of the modern-day pastor!"[23] There is warrant to their claim if the emphasis is placed on the modern-day understanding of the pastoral role, noting that the role of pastor is a definite New Testament concept yet has been ill-defined and misapplied. In the context of this paper, it will be argued that there is biblical warrant (Old and New Testament) for the pastoral role, siding with writers such as William Willimon and Eugene Peterson, while recognizing – in agreement with Viola and Barna – that the modern understanding of the pastoral role has strayed from its biblical mooring. It is to this topic of recalling the

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[21] McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, xi-xii.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2008), 106.

biblical warrant and calling of the pastoral role and what this means for the contemporary evangelical pastor in the Global North that attention shall be given in Chapter Two. This chapter will provide an overview of the biblical understanding of pastoral ministry, looking at both the Old and New Testament, culminating in a look at Christ's Shepherd ministry which involved Shema, Shabbat, and Shalom.

In Chapter Three, a brief historical overview of the development and theology of the pastoral role will be given. This will be followed by addressing concerns of the present reality of pastoral ministry in the evangelical tradition with a return to shepherding ministry as a proposed solution. Chapter Four will build upon the foundation laid in the previous chapter, describing the impact that dependency and intimacy with Jesus can have on the pastor's personal spirituality and henceforth on his or her vocational ministry. The concept of Shema, Shabbat, and Shalom will be looked at in their practical application to the pastoral-shepherd role. Chapter Five will broaden to look at the current state of the evangelical church in Canada. While looking at current statistics, analysis will be applied as to why evangelical churches are in a state of decline and the role of pastors in leading the charge to new territory for the evangelical church in the 21st century Global North. Chapter Six will conclude with tying together the implications and impact of a renewed pastoral identity within the evangelical tradition as a possible answer to the plight of evangelicalism in the Global North.

CHAPTER 2:

A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE PASTORAL ROLE

That there are some who call into question the pastoral role itself as currently prescribed as an ordained vocational position suggests that the issue is not in how the pastoral role is being carried out but rather in that it has been made into a vocation (or has continued as a vocation). Howard Snyder states:

> The New Testament doctrine of ministry rests . . . not on the clergy-laity distinction but on the twin and complementary pillars of the priesthood of all believers and the gifts of the Spirit. Today, four centuries after the Reformation, the full implications of this Protestant affirmation have yet to be worked out. The clergy-laity dichotomy is a direct carry-over from pre-Reformation Roman Catholicism and a throwback to the Old Testament priesthood. It is one of the principal obstacles to the church effectively being God's agent of the Kingdom because it creates a false idea that only "holy men," namely, ordained ministers, are really qualified and responsible for leadership and significant ministry. In the New Testament there are functional distinctions between various kinds of ministries but no hierarchical division between clergy and laity.[1]

Frank Viola notes that the "present-day leadership structure is derived from a *positional mind-set*. This mind-set," states Viola, "casts authority in terms of slots to fill, job descriptions to carry out, titles to sport, and ranks to pull."[2] Within this positional mind-set, terms like pastor or elder become titles representing ecclesiastical offices. Within the context of the New Testament, argues Viola, leadership is founded upon a *functional mind-set*, portraying "authority in terms of how things work organically," focusing "on the expression of the spiritual life."[3] The stress is upon the function, not the

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[1] Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Spring, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 153.

[2] Ibid., 154.

[3] Ibid.

office – the task as opposed to the title, with the main concern lying on "activities like pastor-*ing*, elder-*ing*."[4]

In agreement with Viola's point, this does not negate, however, that some may be called to vocational *pastoring* or *eldering*. Kevin Mahon makes a simple but compelling argument for this from scripture in his book *Pastoring with Elders*. Mahon alludes to the calling of the initial disciples in Matthew 4:18-22, noting that this is a calling they received from the Lord (a Lord-selection as opposed to a self-selection). Mahon gives other examples of such a calling from the Old Testament: Elisha (1 Kings 19), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), and Amos (Amos 7:14-15).[5] In reflecting further upon the call of the initial disciples, Mahon states that Jesus "called them into training and ministry as *full-time* apostles. What we're witnessing here is a call and invitation to leave their employment, their livelihood, and their means of paying the bills to instead make their living from Kingdom news – to make their living from the Gospel."[6]

The larger issue or concern is around what it is that the *vocational pastor* is to do. Charles Jefferson, in his book *The Minister as Shepherd*, notes that while a pastor may be given many different titles, s*hepherding* best describes what it is a pastor does. Jefferson writes:

> Of all the titles which have been chosen for the envoys of the Son of God, that of 'shepherd' is the most popular, the most beautiful, and the most ample. Bishop, presbyter, preacher, priest, clergyman, rector, parson, minister, all of these have been long, and are still in use, but not one of them is so satisfying or sufficient as 'shepherd.' 'Bishop' came into the church from the Gentile world, and was early set aside to designate a special grace of minister – thus losing the range of application which it had formerly possessed. In the original sense of the word, a

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[4] Viola, *Reimagining Church*, 154.

[5] Kevin Mahon, *Pastoring with Elders* (Winnipeg, MB: Word Alive Press, 2012), 1-4.

[6] Ibid., 4.

> bishop is one who oversees and superintends. The head, therefore, of every congregation might be rightfully called a bishop. Such use of it under present conditions would be misleading. 'Presbyter' came into the church through Judaism. Because both the Jewish and Gentile worlds are reflected in our New Testament, presbyter and bishop stand side by side upon its pages. At the beginning, bishop and presbyter were synonymous titles belonging to one and the same official. In time, however, the bishops of the local church dropped the title 'bishop', that name being borne thereafter solely by the heads of dioceses or districts. Presbyter, the name retained by the head of the local congregation, carries the idea of age. Only men of years could be elders in the Jewish church. In the Christian church, age is not a prime qualification for office, or an essential possession of those who lead.[7]

Timothy Whitmer, in agreement with Jefferson's beginning sentence in the above paragraph, suggests that "the fundamental responsibility of church leaders is to shepherd God's flock."[8] Whitmer explains that the word pastor itself comes from the Latin word which means to shepherd. This picture of shepherding, Whitmer argues, is at the very heart of biblical leadership – and yet this emphasis is missing in much of the present understanding of pastoral work.[9]

Jefferson provides some insight as to what would have been understood within the biblical context of Palestine in regard to this shepherding role. "In Palestine," writes Jefferson, "and in the countries round about, a shepherd's work was by no means simple or easy. It was arduous and manifold. . . By glancing at the range of the shepherd's duties we shall be able to comprehend what pastoral service meant to Jesus, why he phrased his charge to the chief of the apostles in the vocabulary of the sheepfold, and how it came to pass the title chosen by him for himself was 'Shepherd.'"[10] Jefferson notes first, that the

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[7] Charles Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd* (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth Book Co., N/D), 9-10.

[8] Timothy Whitmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 2.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, 41.

Eastern shepherd was a watchman, watching for foes or other dangers which could overtake the sheep. Shepherds in the East were furthermore guards. They not only oversaw the sheep, but guarded or protected them as well. Sheep, being helpless animals in many circumstances, needed this protection. The shepherd also served as a guide, leading the sheep into places of nourishment and rest. Interestingly, Jefferson notes that sheep are drawn not driven, indicating the leadership style required of a shepherd. Fourthly, Jefferson notes that the shepherds of Israel served as physicians to the sheep. They also served a saving task – rescuing those sheep that are lost, returning them to the fold. A sheep cannot live alone, but rather was made for community – and a lost sheep is unable to find his/her way home. Those at home are to be fed, another element of the shepherd role: feeding the sheep. Lastly, and perhaps the foundation for all of the rest, the shepherd loved (had compassion for) the sheep.[11]

Pastoral Leadership in the Old Testament

That the concept of shepherding is at the heart of biblical leadership can be seen in Old Testament passages such as: 2 Samuel 5:2; Psalm 23; Psalm 78:72; Jeremiah 3:15; Jeremiah 10:21; Jeremiah 12:10-11; Jeremiah 23:1-2; Jeremiah 25:34-36; Jeremiah 50:6; and Ezekiel 34:1-10. The shepherding motif, however, can be seen throughout the Old Testament scriptures. Timothy Laniak, in *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, notes that "pastoral imagery encompasses shepherds and their flocks as well as the reality of the wilderness," commonly found

[11] Ibid., 41-66.

within the Old Testament narrative, while the word shepherd may not always appear in a specific context – the shepherd motif being engaged implicitly.[12] Laniak gives example by stating that if "we were to restrict ourselves to Pentateuchal texts that use the term 'shepherd' metaphorically, we would be limited to few references (Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Num. 27:17). . . (Yet) we recognize the latent shepherd imagery present throughout the wilderness narratives."[13]

God himself within the Old Testament is seen implicitly as a shepherding God. Hear the words of Deuteronomy 32:10-12: "He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the LORD alone guided him, no foreign god was with him" (ESV). One finds within the Old Testament a shepherding God who is present, as shown in the Exodus experience and stressed in Moses' prayer recorded in Exodus 33:15-16. Not only was the Lord God present, but he was present as a protector: "the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you" (Deuteronomy 23:14a ESV). The concept of deliverance comes across in this passage as well. The concept of God as provider (another shepherd role) can also be found, especially within the Psalms. Psalm 105:40-41, for example, states: "They asked, and he brought quail, and gave them bread from heaven in abundance. He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a

[12] Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 77.

[13] Ibid.

river" (ESV). The provision of manna in the wilderness comes out of the shepherding characteristic of the Lord God. The Lord God is also seen as one who guides in such verses as Exodus 15:13: "You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode" (ESV). This shepherding role of God, it is important to note, arises out of his compassion for his people (see Exodus 3:7-8).[14] This will be seen as well in the shepherding ministry of Jesus.

Within the Psalms there is recorded a number of times a beautiful recognition of the shepherding work of God. The Psalmist states in an act of prayer, "Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock" (Psalm 80:1 NIV), and then in adoration "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care" (Psalm 95:6-7 NIV). Perhaps the greatest picture of the Lord God as shepherd comes out of Psalm 23. Philip J. Nel, in his article *Yahweh is a Shepherd*, notes the use of metaphor in scripture generally and specifically within Psalm 23. He argues that Psalm 23 ought to be interpreted "against the background of the pastoral experience of the shepherd" with three images being accounted for in the psalm: the image of the shepherd (vs. 1-2), the traveler (vs. 3-4), and that of the host (vs. 5-6).[15] While some have argued for two metaphors in this passage (Yahweh as shepherd and Yahweh as host), Nel argues "that only one conceptual metaphor is subjacent to the metaphorical expressions of Psalm 23, i.e.

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[14] Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 79-84.

[15] Philip J. Nel, "Yahweh is a Shepherd," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 27 no. 2 (December 2005): 86.

Yahweh is a shepherd."[16] Nel explains that "verses 1 and 6 form an inclusion; whereas vs. 1 is a statement of confidence, expressing the psalmist's view of Yahweh as his 'shepherd' who will provide, v. 6 re-emphasizes that confidence in the presence of Yahweh, where goodness and love will follow him continually."[17]

A similar metaphorical portrayal of God as shepherd is found in Jeremiah 31:8-12. The Prophet stated:

> Behold, I will bring them from the north country
> and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
> among them the blind and the lame,
> the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together;
> a great company, they shall return here.
> With weeping they shall come,
> and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back,
> I will make them walk by brooks of water,
> in a straight path in which they shall not stumble,
> for I am a father to Israel,
> and Ephraim is my firstborn.
> "Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
> and declare it in the coastlands far away;
> say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him,
> and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.'
> For the Lord has ransomed Jacob
> and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
> They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
> and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,
> over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
> and over the young of the flock and the herd;
> their life shall be like a watered garden,
> and they shall languish no more (ESV).

This shepherding role of God is then seen to extend to Moses. The Psalmist describes it this way: "You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Psalm 77:20 ESV). Laniak stresses the significance of this as follows:

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[16] Nel, "Yahweh is a Shepherd," 86.

[17] Ibid., 86-87.

> The ways in which YHWH is represented as the Shepherd of Israel correspond to the ways in which Moses is represented as his undershepherd. Moses is the *extension* of God's rule in their lives, the *means* of their provision, the *agent* of their deliverance. This prophet is so central to the Torah that these five books are sometimes considered to be his biography. . . Yet the Torah is, ultimately, a revelation of YHWH. This paradox is at the heart of human leadership, biblically understood.[18]

Laniak goes on to note that "central to Moses' many roles was the word of God. As a prophet he was YHWH's unique spokesperson to the community (Exod. 33:11; cf. Deut. 18:18), an extension of God's guiding, nurturing presence for Israel. Moses was the means by which God led and fed his people in the wilderness."[19] This concept of shepherd leadership is seen to extend beyond Moses as well. This is demonstrated quite clearly in Numbers 27:15-18:

> Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, 'Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd." So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him" (ESV).

When Jeremiah and Ezekiel

> speak of Judah's shepherds, they are referring to its officers and leaders, whether spiritual or governmental. . . Kings were expected to lead the way in spiritual matters, just as prophets and priests were expected to influence public policy. The critical point to remember is that leaders in biblical times were seen, first and foremost, as shepherds of the flock entrusted to their care.[20]

Jeremiah was one such shepherd, one comparable to Moses in fact. In 586 the kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon, and Jeremiah was called upon by the Lord to shepherd the

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[18] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 87.

[19] Ibid., 88.

[20] E. Glenn Wagner, *Escape from Church: The Return of the Pastor-Shepherd* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 38-39.

community of God's people through this time. Jeremiah, in similar fashion to Moses, mediated "God's word to his people as prophet" and interceded "for them as priest."[21] Also in similar fashion with Moses, Jeremiah's identity is merged with that of the community.[22]

Early on in the book of Jeremiah is found a picture of a nation who, in a theological sense, is returning to the wilderness. This is another similarity between Moses and Jeremiah; both shepherded God's people through a wilderness experience. This picture is found in Jeremiah 2:1-9, which reads:

> The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of
> Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord,
> "I remember the devotion of your youth,
> your love as a bride,
> how you followed me in the wilderness,
> in a land not sown.
> Israel was holy to the Lord,
> the first fruits of his harvest.
> All who ate of it incurred guilt;
> disaster came upon them,
> declares the Lord."
> Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of
> Israel. Thus says the Lord:
> "What wrong did your fathers find in me
> that they went far from me,
> and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?
> They did not say, 'Where is the Lord
> who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
> who led us in the wilderness,
> in a land of deserts and pits,
> in a land of drought and deep darkness,
> in a land that none passes through,
> where no man dwells?'
> And I brought you into a plentiful land
> to enjoy its fruits and its good things.
> But when you came in, you defiled my land
> and made my heritage an abomination.

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[21] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 131.

[22] Ibid.

> The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?'
> Those who handle the law did not know me;
> the shepherds transgressed against me;
> the prophets prophesied by Baal
> and went after things that do not profit.
> "Therefore I still contend with you,
> declares the Lord,
> and with your children's children I will contend" (ESV).

It is blatantly noticeable in this passage that Jeremiah blames three types of leaders for the people being in such a disreputable state: the priests, the shepherds, and the prophets.[23] Recall, as well, that it was the responsibility of any and all in leadership – whether prophet, priest, or king – to shepherd the people. So it is found within Jeremiah, repeatedly, God's judgment upon the "shepherds" for the lost or wandering state of the people of God. (See Jeremiah 23:1-8; 25:34-38; 50:6-8).

Ezekiel chapter 34 is a key chapter in understanding the shepherd concept within the Old Testament, foreshadowing as well what is to come under the new covenant, namely in Jesus. Andre Mein, in his article *Profitable and Unprofitable Shepherds*, states:

> Surely here, if anywhere, in the first of the major restoration oracles, YHWH appears to show a degree of genuine concern for his people. The prophet casts 'Israel's shepherds' as greedy hirelings who have taken advantage of the flock they were supposed to nurture and protect (34.2-8). The oracle contrasts the failed human shepherds with YHWH the divine shepherd, who cares for his sheep, rescuing them from the rulers who have brought about their exile and returning them to a land of peace, blessing and security (34.10-16).[24]

This thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel is a prophecy which brings a harsh charge against the shepherds of Israel for their failure to care for God's flock. The shepherds in mention,

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[23] Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 132.

[24] Andrew Mein, "Profitable and Unprofitable Shepherds," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31 no 4 (June 2007): 494.

the elders of the nation, own unfaithfulness was in large part the cause of the circumstances the people of God now found themselves in. They failed to shepherd the flock.[25]

Whitmer breaks Ezekiel 34 down into three major sections. The first is Ezekiel 34:1-10 which contains the detailed indictment against the shepherds. The indictment includes the shepherds feeding themselves rather than the flock (verse 2), and failure to "strengthen the sickly, heal the diseased, bind up the broken, and seek the lost (verse 4)."[26] This resulted in God's people literally being scattered and becoming food for the wild beasts of the field (verse 5). Whitmer notes: "they failed to fulfill the most basic functions of shepherds: to feed, lead, and protect the sheep. Instead, the sheep were starved, lost, and prey for wild animals. Even worse, those who were supposed to feed and protect God's flock were actually feeding upon the sheep themselves."[27] Ezekiel 34:3 states: "You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep" (ESV). Mein draws out the moral contradiction of shepherds behaving in this way, stating that the well being of the sheep was to be of prime importance to the royal shepherds of Israel, their main task being that of looking after the interests of the sheep.[28] Joseph Blenkinsopp, notes Mein, describes the "pastoral responsibility" of Israel's shepherds (again, those in public office), as an "opportunity for service, not for personal gain and glory," and a responsibility which calls for "selfless

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[25] Whitmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 20-21.

[26] Ibid., 21.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Mein, "Profitable and Unprofitable Shepherds," 494-495.

dedication and unremitting solicitude."[29] Daniel Block, in his commentary on Ezekiel, notes that within scripture, the metaphorical use of the shepherd image of humans tending humans, the office of shepherd is to be held for the sake of the sheep being ruled.[30]

The second section Whitmer suggests is Ezekiel 34:11-22, in which God promises shepherding care for his people.[31] The failures of the shepherds will be compensated by the Lord. "He himself will seek the lost sheep, care for them, feed them, and protect them. He will lead them to rest, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick."[32] The third section suggested by Whitmer is Ezekiel 34:23-31 which "looks forward to the coming of the perfect shepherd."[33] These sections are seen in fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth, to which attention shall now be directed.

Pastoral Leadership in the New Testament

The shepherd leadership of Christ is perhaps the best place to start when looking at pastoral leadership within the New Testament. Charles Jefferson notes:

> One of the fascinating secrets of 'shepherd' as a title is that the word carries us straight to Christ himself. It associates us at once with him. So far as the New Testament tells us, Jesus never called himself a priest, or a preacher, or a rector, or a clergyman, or a bishop, or an elder, but he liked to think of himself as a shepherd. . .. When he looked out upon the crowds in Galilee, they reminded him of sheep without a shepherd. He told men repeatedly that he had been sent to gather and save the lost sheep of the House of Israel. He considered his followers sheep, and looking into the distance, he saw other sheep which also were his own. . . When he thought of himself in the world to come, seated on a throne with all

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[29] Ibid., 495.

[30] Daniel Block, *Ezekiel 25-48* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 283.

[31] Timothy Whitmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 22.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 23.

> the nations assembled before him, even there he was still a shepherd, doing things which shepherds do.[34]

As noted above, the shepherd ministry of Jesus is foretold in Ezekiel 34. Rather than the sin of selfishness seen in the shepherds described in Ezekiel 34, Jesus is the good shepherd who will rightly shepherd his people in selfless dedication. This is seen perhaps most profoundly in John 10:11 where Jesus states: "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (ESV).

Jesus' words "I am the Good Shepherd" are in direct contrast with the evil shepherds of Ezekiel 34. Whitmer gives expression to the fullness of this; he states:

> These words were rich with meaning to his original listeners. In addition to listeners' familiarity with the vocation of the shepherd in their own day, they would have heard Jesus' identification with the Lord, Israel's shepherd. Jesus, then, declares himself to be the Shepherd-King who had been prophesied by Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Where human shepherds had failed, Jesus as God incarnate would not.[35]

Thomas Oden suggests that as rich in meaning this statement of Jesus would have been to his original listeners, the image ought not to be ruled out as meaningless to modern consciousness and human aspirations. "Listen intently," directs Oden, "to the contemporaneity of the shepherding analogy in John 10:1-18:

- The intimacy of the shepherd's knowledge of the flock. He holds them in his arms.
- The way the shepherd calls each one by its own name.
- The shepherd does not, like the thief or robber, climb in the pen by some unusual means, but enters properly by the gate, being fully authorized to do so.
- The flock listen to the shepherd's voice. They distinguish it from all other voices.
- The shepherd leads them out of the protected area into pastures known to be most fitting – feeding them, leading them 'out and back in.'
- The shepherd characteristically is 'out ahead' of them, not only guiding them, but looking out, by way of anticipation, for their welfare.

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[34] Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, 13-14.

[35] Whitmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 29-30.

- Trusting the shepherd, the sheep are wary of an unproven stranger who might try to lead them abruptly away from the one they have learned to trust, through a history of fidelity.
- Jesus is recalled as the incomparably good shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for the sheep.
- The good shepherd is contrasted by the hireling or temporary worker who, having little at stake, may be prone to run away when danger approaches.
- All members of the flock of which Jesus is the shepherd are one, united by listening to his voice.[36]

In the Gospel of Luke is found what Laniak refers to as the seeking and saving shepherd.[37] Luke states that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10 ESV). In Luke chapter 15 Jesus tells the following parable in response to religious critics who deemed Jesus' association with sinners inappropriate: "If you had a hundred sheep and one of them strayed away and was lost in the wilderness, wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine others to go and search for the lost one until you found it? And then you would joyfully carry it home on your shoulders. When you arrived you would call together your friends and neighbors to rejoice with you because your lost sheep was found" (Luke 15:4-6 TLB). Julie Perry draws out the selflessness of the Good Shepherd as depicted in this passage, noting that "this shepherd loves his sheep with such a relentless, compelling love that he will even put himself in danger."[38] Perry goes on to suggest that in telling this parable Jesus may well have been thinking of Ezekiel 34:11-16 in which God (the Good Shepherd) seeks after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Perry feels the text of Ezekiel 34, beyond being familiar to Jesus, would have "informed his

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[36] Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, 51-52.

[37] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 195.

[38] Julie R. Perry, "You Are the One Whom Jesus Loves: A Sermon on Luke 15:1-10; Ezekiel 34:11-16," *Review and Expositor* 109 no. 2 (Spring 2012): 292.

understanding of his own ministry and mission" (seen in Jesus self-identification in John's gospel as the Good Shepherd).[39]

Within the Gospel of Matthew as well this shepherding metaphor is to be found, both in relation to Jesus and more broadly.[40] John Paul Heil writes: "The use of the metaphor of shepherd and sheep for the leaders and their people embraces the entire Gospel of Matthew. It begins in the infancy narrative (2:6), extends through the ministry and teaching of Jesus (9:36; 10:6,16; 14:14; 15:24,32; 18:12-14; 25:32), and reaches its climax in the passion narrative (26:31-32)."[41]

In Matthew 9:36 Jesus identifies his ongoing care and concern for the sheep, and noting that they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, he felt compassion for them. Andrew Purves instructs:

> It is of great significance that Matthew saw fit to use compassion to describe the overarching response of Jesus to the needs of the crowd. It was central to his mission. It defined him in the depths of his being. It characterized the quality of his relationships and what that quality cost him. It described a way of being, a lifestyle if you like, in which he was present for others in such a way that they were made whole. . . There can be no adequate presentation of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth which omits his compassion.[42]

John Cabrido, in a fascinating article "A Mark of the Shepherd: The Narrative Function of σπλαγχνίζομαι in Matthew's Story of Jesus," identifies the centrality of compassion in

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[39] Ibid.

[40] John Paul Heil, in his article "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy of the Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor in Matthew," articulates a compelling argument showing Ezekiel 34 as providing a complete semantic field for the unfolding of the shepherd metaphor in Matthews gospel.

[41] John Paul Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy of the Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor in Matthew," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 no. 5 (October 1993): 698.

[42] Andrew Purves, *The Search for Compassion: Spirituality and Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 39-40.

the shepherd ministry of Jesus, encapsulated in the word σπλαγχνίζομαι. The term means to be moved with compassion, and is used a mere five times in Matthew's gospel – each time in relation to Jesus, revealing his inner spirit.[43] In Matthew 9:36, this is the term used to describe the response of Jesus to the crowds: "When he saw the crowds, he *ἐσπλαγχνίσθη* for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (ESV). Within Matthew's gospel, this term is used for Jesus not merely as a descriptive word to show how Jesus was feeling within a particular context, but rather portrays an attribute of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Furthermore, the compassion of Jesus is seen to be more then mere sentiment but rather is effective.[44]

Whitmer notes, in reflecting on Matthew 9:36, that Jesus not only saw their helpless condition, but also recognized the cause – the absence of proper shepherds (just as the weakened condition of Israel was connected by Jeremiah and Ezekiel to failed shepherding).[45] Jesus calls for the disciples to pray, and shortly thereafter sends them out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6). This implies that with the coming of Christ, the shepherding ministry does not cease, but rather is once again reinstated (perhaps in fulfilment of the prophecy recorded in Jeremiah 23:4). Whitmer suggests that the Lord's plan was to continue "to provide care for his people through Spirit-filled, -

[43] John Cabrido, "A Mark of the Shepherd: The Narrative Function of σπλαγχνίζομαι in Matthew's Story of Jesus," *Philippiniana Sacra* 42 no. 127 (Jan-Apr 2008): 164.

[44] Ibid., 164, 168.

[45] Whitmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 32-33.

gifted, and -called undershepherds."[46] At the close of John's gospel is found the charge to Peter to "shepherd the flock of the model shepherd (21:15-17)."[47]

In referring to the pastoral role, there are essentially three terms used within the New Testament. One is in fact the term shepherd (ποιμένας in Ephesians 4:11). Within 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 one finds the terms elder and overseer being used to describe this shepherding role, with all three terms (elder, shepherd, and overseer) being used together in 1 Peter 5:1-2. Frank Viola notes that in fact elders were overseers and shepherds. He writes: "The term *elder* refers to their *character*. The term *overseer* refers to their *function*. And the term *shepherd* refers to their *gifting*."[48] Kevin Mahon notes that within the New Testament, one does not find a church with only one elder or a person presently understood as pastor. Rather, there was a plurality of elders who served the church, "called to shepherd the Lord's church through the power of the Holy Spirit."[49] In 1 Peter 5:1-4 is found this image of a plurality of elders, with the call to be good shepherds, after the example of Jesus:

> Therefore, I strongly urge the elders among you [pastors, spiritual leaders of the church], as a fellow elder and as an eyewitness [called to testify] of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory that is to be revealed: shepherd *and* guide *and* protect the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not [motivated] for shameful gain, but with wholehearted enthusiasm; not lording it over those assigned to your care [do not be arrogant or overbearing], but be examples [of Christian living] to the flock [set a pattern of integrity for your congregation]. And when the Chief Shepherd (Christ) appears, you will receive the [conqueror's] unfading crown of glory (AMP).

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[46] Whitmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 34.

[47] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 221.

[48] Viola, *Reimagining Church*, 170.

[49] Mahon, *Pastoring with Elders*, 31.

Shema, Shabbat, Shalom and the Shepherd Role of Jesus

Within Deuteronomy is found a theology rooted on the basic principle that God has spoken, his words being given to Moses to be passed on to the people. The people, in response to the word of God, are to hear – which includes believing and obeying, as well as preserving the word of God for future generations.[50] Perry B. Yoder notes that the Shema encapsulates what Leo Baeck refers to as an ethical monotheism which is the basis for Israel's monotheism. Yoder quotes Baeck as stating that "in Judaism to know God does not imply an understanding of the nature of His being but a knowledge of His government, a perception of and effort to follow the right way, the way which God has revealed and which is the same for all types of human beings."[51]

Interestingly, Yoder points out that while theology was not unimportant to the nation Israel, creedal formulation was not at the center of importance for most Jews. A Jew was not defined strictly by what they believed (orthodoxy) but rather in submission to the will of God as defined in Torah (the commandments). Orthopraxy was more central to Jewish identity than orthodoxy.[52] Early on in Judaism, the Decalogue and the Shema were recited together, connecting these two statements (as indicated as well by their close proximity in Deuteronomy 5 and 6. "This connection would seem to indicate,"

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[50] Peter Adam, *Hearing God's Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 53.

[51] Perry B. Yoder, *Take this Word to Heart: The Shema in Torah and Gospel* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2005), 2.

[52] Ibid., 3.

suggests Yoder, "an early notion that the Shema, the affirmation concerning God, needed to be accompanied by a similar affirmation concerning ethics."[53]

> So the command, 'Hear, O Israel' is characteristic of Deuteronomy. . . This command is the basis of the Shema: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' (6:4-5). What is it to love God according to the Shema? To love God is to value his words: 'Keep these words . . . Recite them to your children and talk about them . . . Bind them as a sign on your hand . . . fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on your doorposts . . .' (6:6-9). 'Hear, O Israel' is followed by instructions to remember, teach, discuss, meditate on and practice these words of God. Here is the verbal spiritualty at the heart of Deuteronomy.[54]

Jackie A. Wyse, in her article "Loving God as an act of Obedience," expresses her belief that "Deuteronomy 5-6 functions as a literary unit, a unit that purposefully connects the Decalogue to the Shema, and vise versa. The implication is that obedience to God's commands (embodied in the Decalogue) and loving God (embodied in the Shema) are actions intricately bound up with one another."[55]

One important note of clarification which Wyse makes, and is worth noting here as well, is that the call to Shema (orthopraxy) does not equate to works righteousness. Wyse explains:

> I would begin with the well-known Jewish conviction that the first word of the Decalogue is a word of grace, a word reminding the community that this God whose commands they are to obey, this God whom they are to love with all that is theirs – this is the God that delivered them from Egypt even before they had become God's covenant people. The Exodus as an emblem of God's gracious initiative in history thus serves as the foundation for Israel's life together, including the community's own efforts to live in love for God and in obedience to God's commands. In fact, it is the gracious liberation of YHWH that inspires such obedience, and that makes YHWH a God worth obeying. Obedience to YHWH's

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[53] Yoder, *Take this Word to Heart*, 3.

[54] Adam, *Hearing God's Words*, 53.

[55] Jackie A. Wyse, "Loving God as an Act of Obedience," in *Take this Word to Heart*, ed. Perry B. Yoder (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2005), 36.

> commands is not a method for obtaining righteousness; rather, it is an expression of love for the God who has been and who continues to be the people's deliverer. Obedience thus functions as both an act of gratitude for the liberation that has already occurred and an act of hope for the liberation that is yet to come.[56]

In his book *Take this Word to Heart*, Yoder reflects upon what the most important verse in the Bible might be. Some, he suggests, would answer with John 3:16, others perhaps Acts 16:31 ("Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (ESV). If you were to ask Jesus, however, Yoder suggests the answer would not be either of these verses.[57] Hear Jesus' answer to a similar question:

> And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength' (Mark 12:28-30 ESV).

It is worth noting that within the synoptic gospels, Jesus connects the command to love God with that of loving one's neighbor – citing both Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. The love of God is overtly commanded within the Shema, but the love of neighbor is not similarly commanded within the Shema. As noted above, however, the connection of the Shema with the Decalogue creates as well the connection between love of God and love of neighbor.[58] In referencing Dale C. Allision Jr., Jeff T. Williams, in his article "Love of God and neighbor in Luke's Gospel," also makes this same argument – that the love of God and love of neighbor form a natural summary of the Decalogue. And while an earlier connection between Leviticus 19:18 and the Decalogue is difficult to trace,

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[56] Wyse, "Loving God as an Act of Obedience," 51.

[57] Yoder, *Take this Word to Heart: The Shema in Torah and Gospel*, 1.

[58] Wyse, "Loving God as an Act of Obedience," 51.

"early New Testament evidence connects Leviticus 19:18 with the Decalogue."[59] Paul makes this connection within his letter to the church at Rome, admonishing the believers: "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10 ESV).

Sabbath is another important element in the life of God's people, and the life of God himself. Brueggemann writes: "YHWH is a Sabbath-keeping God, which fact ensures that restfulness and not restlessness is at the center of life. YHWH is a Sabbath-giving and a Sabbath-commanding God. . . Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest."[60] In Exodus 33 Moses pleads with God to lead his people, and in response God promised two things: his presence, and rest (see Exodus 33:14). Skip MacCarty notes that "God Himself is His people's true rest. As they would put their faith in Him, and . . . obey His commandments, they would experience covenant rest – a confident rest in His love and promises to provide for their temporal necessities and eternal salvation."[61]

Sabbath is also an important concept within the Decalogue. This fourth commandment has been seen as a crucial bridge which connects the Ten Commandments

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[59] Jeffrey T. Williams, "Love of God and Neighbor in Luke's Gospel," in *Take this Word to Heart*, ed. Perry B. Yoder (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2005), 86, 89.

[60] Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 10.

[61] Skip MacCarty, *In Granite of Ingrained?* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007), 217-218.

together.[62] In Exodus 20-3-7, it is seen that the first three commandments are in reference to God, his character, and his name. The narrative context surrounding God is that of the exodus. Exodus 20:2 states: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (ESV). This God who delivers "*from slavery* and consequently *from the work system of Egypt* and *from the gods of Egypt* who require and legitimate that work system" is also a God who commands his people to rest, and who in fact rests himself.[63] MacCarty elaborates on the implications of God's deliverance and rest in bringing Israel out of Egypt. He writes: "When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He promised to lead them into Canaan and give them rest from their enemies that they might worship Him, be groomed by His Spirit into a holy people who 'keep his precepts and observe his laws,' and fulfill their missionary purpose unhindered (Ps. 105:42-45; cf. Deut. 12:8-11)."[64] The biblical narrative informs us that the people rebelled, failing to trust in God who shepherded them in the wilderness, bringing them up to the borders of Canaan (see Numbers 14:2-11). They hence returned to the wilderness to wander for forty years until a new generation could arise (Numbers 14:26-33).

Joshua lead this next generation into Canaan, providing for Israel the opportunity to find rest from their enemies and in this context to be able to love (obey) God unhindered. This call is issued in Joshua 22:4-5, which states:

> And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brothers, as he promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan. Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of

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[62] Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 2.

[63] Ibid.

[64] MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained?*, 220.

> the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul (ESV).

"In other words," suggests MacCarty, "now that God has given you physical rest from your enemies, strive to enter the spiritual rest of complete trust in God that will manifest itself in love for God and obedience to His commandments."[65] As the narrative of God's people continues, it is found that "the physical rest Joshua gave Israel from their enemies never translated into the spiritual rest of complete trust in God, love for God, and obedience to His commandments."[66]

It is found, however, that God did not cease to extend the invitation to enter his rest. Psalm 95:7-11 records one such invitation:

> For he is our God,
> and we are the people of his pasture,
> and the sheep of his hand.
> Today, if you hear his voice,
> do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
> as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
> when your fathers put me to the test
> and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.
> For forty years I loathed that generation
> and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart,
> and they have not known my ways."
> Therefore I swore in my wrath,
> "They shall not enter my rest" (ESV).

Jesus also extended the invitation within his own life and ministry to enter into the "rest" of God.[67] In Matthew's gospel these words of Jesus are recorded: "Come to me, all you

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[65] MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained?*, 221.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Within the four gospels, the Sabbath is found to be at the heart of an ongoing dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees. For an overview of the relevant passages in the gospels in relation to this, see chapter 8 in *Sabbath and Jubilee* by Richard H. Lowery.

who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (NIV). These words of Jesus invite his listeners burdened possibly by strenuous circumstances under Roman rule, but likely also burdened by "the endless requirements of an over-coded religious system that required endless attentiveness," to come and find rest – in him.[68] Brueggemann writes of Jesus: "He becomes the embodiment of Sabbath rest for those who are no longer defined and committed to the system of productiveness. In this role he is, as he is characteristically, fully in sync with the tradition of Israel and with the Sabbath God who occupies that tradition."[69]

Interestingly, "Sabbath provides the setting for Jesus' inaugural sermon in Luke 4," which is a message about Shalom.[70] Randy Woodley suggests a proper understanding of Jesus would be to understand him as shalom "coming into the world from the shalom community of the Trinity."[71] The intention of Jesus coming as shalom is for "the mission of birthing and restoring shalom to the world" in and through himself as the Christ.[72] Luke 4:16-27 is one of the references to the shalom-based ministry of Jesus. Yoder notes that within the other Synoptic Gospels, this event is placed later in Jesus' ministry; Luke, however, places it at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry – presumably because Luke

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[68] Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 11-12.

[69] Ibid., 12.

[70] Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 137.

[71] Randy S. Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 25.

[72] Ibid.

understands it to contain an important statement about Jesus' purpose.[73] Jesus will be "meeting the physical needs of the needy, he will be doing God's works of liberation and shalom justice."[74] Acts of liberation and justice, as part of Shalom, pointing to Jesus as the Messiah are also seen in Luke 7:18-22:

> The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them (ESV).

The Hebrew word Shalom is often thought of to mean peace, which is not a wrong understanding of the word – but it has much more depth than perhaps this one word can hold. Woodley, in *Shalom and the Community of Creation*, suggests that defining Shalom as peace is correct "only if you consider it correct to call the Grand Canyon 'a large crack in the ground' or the Pacific Ocean 'a large pool of water."[75] Woodley goes on to explain: "Not only does shalom express much more than 'peace,' but the kind of peace shalom represents is active and engaged, going far beyond the mere absence of conflict."[76] Cornelius Plantinga Jr. simply states that shalom "is the way

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[73] Perry B. Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1987), 121.

[74] Ibid., 122.

[75] Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation*, 10.

[76] Ibid.

things ought to be."[77] Nathan Hunt, in his blog *The Gospel in 5D: Shalom Spreading*, states that he is convinced the character of the Kingdom of God is in fact Shalom. He writes: "This word is one of the most evocative in all of scripture. Shalom exists when all people equitably experience peace and justice, a comprehensive rightness in the relationship between all things. . . Shalom is a function of the two greatest commandments being worked out through the life of the Church: love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:37-39)."[78]

> Scripture is a story of the restoration of *shalom*. Scripture texts declaring God as creator reveal God's immense love for human beings made in the divine image. God is revealed as caregiver (shepherd) for human beings throughout the Bible. God makes covenant with Israel and in compassion rescues this particular people from slavery and genocide in Egypt. God establishes laws for Israel that in numerous ways codify respect for the sanctity of human life and are designed to ensure justice and human well-being. God is treated as Israel's only true king and the sovereign before whom every Israelite, even the king, must bow. Social justice and peace depend on acknowledgement of God and obedience to God's will.[79]

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was calling others into the kingdom - often the marginalized, but also the religious. It was a call to repent from the ways of this world to live in the way God intended. To sin no more, to act justly, to show compassion. The words of Micah sum up well what is encapsulated in God's desire for humanity: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8 ESV). This is life in the

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[77] Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 10.

[78] Nathan Hunt, "The Gospel in 5D: Shalom Spreading." For Shalom. February 9, 2015.

[79] David Gushee, "Shalom," in *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom*, ed. by Bruce Ellis Benson, Malinda Elizabeth Berry and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 65.

kingdom – this is shalom. The call into God's Kingdom (βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ·) is a call into a community in which God is in charge – a community of shalom. The incarnation of Jesus indicates the persistent intention of God to call people into shalom community. Jesus "lived out a shalom life, pleasing to God, being led by the Holy Spirit and in communion with God," always inviting those around him into just such a life.[80]

In his article "Jesus of the Gospels and the Christian Vision of Shalom," Lamar Williamson articulates what dimensions of Shalom emerge in the words and deeds of Jesus. Williamson writes of peace as harmony among the disciples – harmony not meaning the absence of conflict but rather alluding to how conflict is resolved. Jesus admonishes his disciples to "have the qualities of salt among yourselves and live in peace (εἰρηνεύετε) with each other" (Mark 9:50 NLT). They are also called upon to love their enemies, and to repay evil with good. Within the Sermon on the Mount Jesus instructed them to not be angry with one another, and to reconcile where there is broken relationship with a brother or sister; Jesus states that those who keep peace are blessed.[81] Perhaps more significant, however, is peace as wholeness as seen in the ministry of Jesus. Williamson notes that at the simplest level this wholeness was physical. Numerous times Jesus is seen providing physical wholeness to those with disabilities and diseases within the four gospels. Often this is accompanied with the words "Go in peace," as with the woman who has been suffering with the issue of blood (see Mark 5:32). Williamson notes, as with this example, the physical wholeness which Jesus offered also extended to

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[80] Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation*, 32.

[81] Lamar Williamson, "Jesus of the Gospels and the Christian Vision of Shalom" in *Horizons in Biblical Theology* (December 1984): 61-62.

a social wholeness – the untouchables of society being able to now reintegrate. This is seen happening as well with the irreputable woman in Luke 7:38-50.[82]

Along with the physical and social element, shalom in the ministry of Jesus also meant spiritual wholeness. Spiritual wholeness is to be a harmony with the will of God in and through obedient relationship. Jesus had this wholeness (shalom) even to the point of death. This type of peace with God may be wrought with conflict with the world or one's own selfish desires.[83] Shalom as spiritual wholeness also refers to one's life in Christ. Williamson writes:

> shalom as spiritual wholeness is the union with God in Christ of which the Fourth Gospel speaks so often. "I have said this to you," we read in John 16:33, "that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Here peace is an inner tranquility in the face of trouble which is a function of union with Christ, often expressed in John as abiding in Christ.[84]

In Jesus (the Good Shepherd), these components of Shema, Shabbat, and Shalom come together: Jesus lives a perfect life of loving God and loving others, drawing attention to the need to rest in the love of God and operate peaceably out of this space. The ministry of Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, has been to continue to call others into just such a life – and he commissions others to take up this role after him in shepherding the people of God.

While the role of the modern-day pastor has been called into question, it is evident that there is ample biblical material to warrant a pastoral role in the church (as detailed above). It is a role which emanates from the very heart of God for his people. The pastoral role is a God-ordained and God-modelled role established in both the Old

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[82] Williamson, "Jesus of the Gospels and the Christian Vision of Shalom," 58-59.

[83] Ibid., 59-60.

[84] Ibid., 60-61.

and New Covenant and carried into the early church. The question now becomes, in reflecting upon this biblical role, that of what is the pastor to be doing? With Shema, Shabbat and shalom as foundational pieces for the pastoral ministry, one begins to see an obedient response to the loving heart of God evidenced in love for God above all else as central to a pastor's identity, coupled with a trusting rest in the love of God, followed by a living out of the love of God in community. These are the parameters at the heart of the pastoral role, evidenced fully in the life and ministry of Jesus the Good Shepherd. The modern-day pastor has lost his or her moorings, with concerns other than Shema, Shabbat and Shalom vying for attention in the pastor's life and ministry. In the next chapter an historical look at the pastoral role will provide both some context and some suggestions for the current situation.

CHAPTER 3:

THE CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL PASTOR: HOW DID WE GET HERE?

> The Greek word translated *pastors* is *poimenas*. It means shepherds. (*Pastor* is the Latin word for shepherd). *Pastor*, then, is a metaphor to describe a particular function in the church. It is not an office or a title. A first-century shepherd had nothing to do with the specialized and professional sense it has come to have in contemporary Christianity. Therefore, Ephesians 4:11 does not envision a pastoral office, but merely one of many functions in the church. Shepherds are those who naturally provide nurture and care for God's sheep. It is a profound error, therefore, to confuse shepherds with an office or title as is commonly conceived today. At best, Ephesians 4:11 is oblique. It offers absolutely no definition or description of who pastors are. It simply mentions them. Regrettably, we have filled this word with our own western concept of what a pastor is. We have read our idea of the contemporary pastor back into the New Testament. Never would any first-century Christian have conceived of the contemporary pastoral office![1]

Pastors within the evangelical tradition in North America are finding themselves in trying space. First, the evangelical church in the Global North is in a state of decline; secondly, many evangelical pastors are also in danger of burnout. Sam Reimer, Professor of Sociology at Crandall University, notes that "one of the most commonly cited threats to pastoral well-being is too many time demands. Studies show that the clear majority of pastors spend more than 40 hours a week at work," with the average being 51.7 hours a week.[2] Along with the long hours, evangelical pastors have also shown to be facing loneliness and burnout. Approximately 70 percent of North American evangelical pastors regularly think of leaving the ministry due to stress. A leave of absence due to burnout or depression has been reported by 40 percent of evangelical pastors. Furthermore, the longevity of pastors in the evangelical tradition is shortening, with up to 80 percent

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[1] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, 107.

[2] Samuel Reimer, "Pastoral Well-Being: Findings from the Canadian Evangelical Churches Study," *Church and Faith Trends* 3, no. 2 (August 2010): 1.

leaving the ministry in the first 10 years.[3] While these statistics are a concern solely as they relate to those serving in the pastoral office, the impact of these statistics on the local church ought not to be overlooked.

In considering the high rate of dissatisfaction and burnout of evangelical pastors, due at least in part to the varied demands on their time, it begs the question of what exactly pastoral care is, and if a return to a historical understanding of this role may provide a partial solution to the problem. Andrew Purves expresses the concern that contemporary pastoral care is, for the most part, uninformed by historical practice. A consequence of this, he suggests, "is that much pastoral work today is disaffiliated from the church's theological heritage."[4] Thomas Oden puts it this way: "there has been a pervasive amnesia toward the classical Christian past. This has resulted in a bland state of absentmindedness and a growing naiveté toward the wisdom of classical pastoral care."[5]

A Brief History of the Development of the Pastoral Role

Frank Viola and George Barna, in their book *Pagan Christianity?*, briefly explore the historical foundation of the present day pastoral role. Noting that the concept of the contemporary pastor was absent from the early church, they ask where the notion of the contemporary pastor has come from. "The roots of this tale are tangled and complex,"

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[3] Carey Peterson, "Burnout and the Gospel: Moving from Burnout to True Elders with the Gospel Grand Narrative," (DMIN diss., George Fox University, 2014), accessed December 8, 2015, 3-4.

[4] Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 5.

[5] Thomas Oden, *The Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 11.

suggests Viola and Barna, "and they reach back as far as the fall of man."[6] The authors note that following the fall there arose an "implicit desire in people to have a physical leader to bring them to God."[7] Viola and Barna then pick up the more noticeable beginning of the pastoral role in the concept of Bishop which developed under Ignatius of Antioch (35-107).[8] This began a shift which would have dramatic ramifications for the organization and ministry of the local church; rather than being shepherded by a plurality of elders (who were assisted by deacons), there arose a single bishop or pastor overseeing a church or group of churches.[9] Under the Bishop developed the role of a local presbyter or priests, who became known as clergy under the influence of Tertullian. These individuals became responsible for duties within the church such as the sacraments.[10]

William H. Willimon, in his *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, provides a great, concise overview of the ordained office. He writes:

> Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition*, our oldest surviving liturgy of ordination, linked Christian ministry to the Old Testament priesthood. This typology, found in Athanasius, Tertullian, and the writings of other early Fathers, became a major way of thinking about clergy in the medieval period. It contributed to a sacerdotalizing and distancing of the role of clergy, eventually making them primarily those who concoct the Christian liturgy rather than those entrusted with the community that is formed through the liturgy.[11]

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[6] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 108.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 110.

[9] Witmer, *Shepherd Leadership*, 48.

[10] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?,* 108-130.

[11] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 42.

Willimon goes on to explain the disjunction of clergy from the community which occurred in the Third and Fourth Lateran Councils of 1179 and 1215, in which ordination began to transition from originating within the local church community to being by appointment from a bishop. Also in the Fourth Lateran Council there emerged what Willimon refers to as the *sacramental character of ordination*, the character of the ordained being linked to the elaborate requirements for the priests in the Old Testament; this contributed "to an ontological (as opposed to functional) sacredotalization of the priesthood."[12] Priests, henceforth, were set apart – made different – because of something sacred conferred upon them in the sacrament of ordination. The priesthood came to be seen as a status over a function in the service of the church community; one was "ordained as a priest apart from designation by and service linked to a particular community."[13] This created both a connection and a separation; it connected the priesthood with the high priesthood (as described in Hebrews 5:1-6), linking the *cleros* alone to the priesthood of Christ, with the separation being that the priesthood of the *laos* of God was undercut.[14]

This sacerdotal focus to ministry drew a direct parallel between the Levitical priesthood and the office of bishop within the New Covenant. The effect of this was twofold: it distanced the bishop from the laity while also elevating the bishop over the other offices in the church.[15] Reminiscent of the corrupt shepherds of ancient Israel,

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[12] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 42.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 43.

[15] Witmer, *Shepherd Leadership*, 49-50.

Witmer describes the situation which arose out of these circumstances: "As the church continued to move away from the parity of the elders in overseeing the flock, the hierarchy of the church gained more and more authority. Abuse of authority also grew to the point where no longer did the officers exist to serve the flock."[16]

With the Reformation, the concept of the Catholic priesthood was called into question and some changes wrought, progress being made in returning to the biblical structure of the church. What was not dispelled, however, was the concept of clergy. With the influence of people such as John Calvin, the term *pastor* became popularized in reference to the clergy.[17] The pastor became known as the ruling elder within a local church.[18] This concept of a ruling elder to care for the well-being of the flock of Christ, the people of God, was essentially lost from the third century to the sixteenth century. Since the sixteenth century is has come to be applied, within Protestant churches, almost singularly to the teaching elder or pastor (singular).[19] Viola and Barna, while recognizing that the Reformers fought the idea of the priesthood within Roman Catholicism, abolishing the office of the bishop and reducing the role of the priest back to that of presbyter, feel that this was not enough to restore a biblically practiced pastoral ministry. They argue that "the Reformers carried the Roman Catholic clergy/laity distinction straight into the Protestant Movement" while also maintaining the Catholic idea of

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[16] Witmer, *Shepherd Leadership*, 50.

[17] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?,* 128.

[18] Witmer, *Shepherd Leadership*, 53.

[19] Ibid., 72.

ordination.[20] So, while abolishing the office of bishop, the concept of one-bishop rule was resurrected and merely clothed "in new garb."[21]

Another element of the Protestant Reformation was an effort to restore all baptized believers to the priesthood, what is known as the priesthood of all believers; the understanding is that all believers are baptized into the high priesthood of Jesus – sharing in Christ's priesthood to the world. Willimon, referencing Martin Luther, articulates the implications of this for the pastoral role:

> For the sake of good order, when the church gathers, some from among the 'priests' are to serve as 'priests' or 'servants of the servants of God.' These are called *pastors*. 'We are all priests, as many of us are Christians. But the priests, as we call them, are ministers (*diener*) chosen from among us, who do all that they do. And the priesthood is nothing but a ministry,' says Luther.[22]

Within the context of the Protestant Reformation the connection was again being established between the gathered community (congregation) and the function of the clergy. The chief concern of the pastor became care of the congregation. "Protestant ordination rites," explains Willimon, "stressed the pastor as shepherd, as the one who kept the flock, as the one whose ministry arose from and was focused upon the gathered people of God."[23]

In *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World*, Robert E. Webber provides a very concise overview of this historical development of the pastoral role, up to the present day. He writes:

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[20] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, 127-128.

[21] Ibid., 128.

[22] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 44.

[23] Ibid., 45.

> From the very beginning of Christianity, the question of leadership has been an issue in the local church. In Acts 2, church elders appointed deacons to serve the Hellenists who felt neglected; in Acts 7, bishops, elders, and deacons came together to discuss and solve the problem of what was expected of gentile converts; in the letters to the Corinthian church, many gifts and callings within the church are described; and in the pastoral epistles, Paul delineates three functions of ministry – oversight, teaching, and service. By the end of the first century, church leadership was situated in bishops, presbyters, and deacons; by the medieval period, there was a pope, cardinals, archbishops, priests, and deacons; in the sixteenth century, the Reformers placed leadership in a council of presbyters; by the seventeenth century, a more democratic form of government, congregationalism, emerged; and by the latter part of the twentieth century, leadership in many evangelical churches was modeled on business and the power of the CEO. Clearly the business model of the church is out of step with two thousand years of history.[24]

"During the last century, pastors, perhaps groping about for some socially approved work to do," suggests William Willimon, "took on a host of roles that were new to ministry – coordination of volunteers, management of social service agencies, counselling, financial administration, community activism."[25] It is fascinating to think of a pastor seeking socially approved work to do, indicating the vacuum present within the identifying of the pastoral role. Granted that the pastoral role is diverse, the present-day diversity is beyond what is helpful in maintaining pastoral health and identity.[26]

Coinciding with the thoughts of Webber on the adopting of a CEO or business model of pastoral ministry, Willimon boldly challenges the concept of pastor as manager. He writes:

> As I heard Henri Nouwen say to us pastors, 'If you do not know what is absolutely essential in ministry, then you will do the merely important.' Because so much of what a pastor could do is important, it is easy to become bogged down, sidetracked by the merely important to the neglect of the absolutely

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[24] Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 147.

[25] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 66.

[26] Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, 49-50.

> essential, unless one keeps ever before oneself the essential theological rationale for ministry. . . The history of pastoral care in America is a history of the adoption of inappropriate models of leader by the clergy. This stands as a warning to us of the perils of uncritical adoption of secular techniques and models of leadership. The pastor as manager can be an all too appealing role for pastors who lack the creativity and the courage to do more than simply maintain the status quo of the church – to keep the machinery oiled and functioning rather than pushing the church to ask larger, more difficult questions about its purpose and faithfulness. Pastors are called to lead, not simply to manage. Many of us serve churches that have become dysfunctional, unfaithful, and boring. Having lost a clear sense of our mission, we diffuse ourselves in inconsequential busyness. Lacking a sense of the essential, we do the merely important. Any pastors who feels no discontent with the church's unfaithfulness, who is too content with inherited forms of the church, is not just being a bad manager, but has made the theological mistake of surrendering the joyful adventure of pastoral ministry for the theologically dubious office of ecclesiastical bureaucrat.[27]

Classical Pastoral Theology

Thomas Oden notes in his classic work, *Pastoral Theology*, that "pastoral theology as a unifying discipline was flourishing a century ago and remained robust until the beginning of this century, yet it has largely faded into such hazy memory that none of its best representatives is still in print."[28] Eugene Peterson forcefully states that the "one century that has the least to commend" in regards to the pastoral role is the twentieth.[29] Why? Peterson answers: "Has any century been so fascinated with gimmickry, so surfeited with fads, so addicted to nostrums, so unaware of God, so out of touch with the underground spiritual streams which water eternal life?"[30]

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[27] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 61-63.

[28] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, xii.

[29] Eugene Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 2.

[30] Ibid., 2-3.

David Fisher reflects on the current state of pastoral ministry in his book *The 21st Century Pastor*, noting that it has no unifying theory which unites it. Fisher notes:

> Somewhere along the way the old theological discipline called 'pastoral theology' was lost. For centuries each theological tradition had a classic pastoral theology text, and pastoral theology was a central part of the theological curriculum. Around the turn of the century, pastoral theology disappeared, and in conservative quarters it was replaced by 'practical theology' – 'how-to' pastoral training. In the mainline churches 'pastoral care', in which the pastor became primarily a counsellor was the new discipline. In most of American Protestantism, biblical and theological reflection on pastoral ministry ceased. The practice of ministry became the theology of ministry.[31]

Fisher goes on to note that pastoral ministry has become increasingly therapeutic, the shepherding role of caring for the flock becoming more one of counselling. The base of this pastoral training became that of the social sciences as opposed to theology – reducing the pastoral art to human skill! "The transcendent dimension of ministry," argues Fisher, "its grounding in God himself, was removed from pastoral theology. In fact, theology itself disappeared as the practical work of ministry was removed" with pastoral ministry now being described in human terms. [32]

Even where the term pastoral theology is used, it is a field, note Culbertson and Shippee, "without a clear definition: its precise meaning and component parts seem to vary widely from one denomination to the next and from one seminary to the next. The how-to of pastoral care and the component elements in the process of clergy character formation seem to be equally slippery."[33]

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[31] David Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 9.

[32] Ibid., 9-11.

[33] Philip L. Culbertson and Arthur Bradford Shippee, eds., *The Pastor: Readings from the Patristic Period* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), xi.

As mentioned, a return to understanding classical pastoral care may prove helpful. Three texts shall be briefly looked at in the classical tradition pertaining to pastoral care: Gregory of Nazianzus' *In Defence of His Flight to Pontus*, Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*, and Martin Bucer's *Concerning the True Care of Souls*. Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389) was a Cappadocian father and served briefly as the bishop of Constantinople. He resigned and retired to Nazianzus for prayer and study, pastoral presence an important part of Gregory's theological reflections.[34] Gregory the Great (540-604) was an instrumental medieval pope who saw himself as a servant of the servants of God. He was the first monk to ascend to the papacy and was designated by the Roman Catholics as a doctor of the church and one of six Latin fathers. Throughout the Middle Ages, Gregory's *Pastoral Care* was given to each new Western bishop at consecration.[35] Martin Bucer (1491-1551) appears a little later in church history, contemporary with the Protestant Reformation. Influenced by hearing Martin Luther, Bucer transitioned out of the Roman Catholicism (in which he served as a Dominican monk) to become a prominent Reformer in Strasbourg. Bucer's *Concerning the True Care of Souls* provides wonderful insight from this time period on the pastoral role.[36] Purves suggests that Nazianzus' writings "on his understanding of the nature of the priesthood and the person of the priest" formed the basis for the pastoral theology of Gregory the Great put forth in *Pastoral Care*, which

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[34] Kelby Cotton, "Gregory of Nazianzus," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 485.

[35] Chris L. Armstrong, "Gregory the Great," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 487.

[36] Keith Mathison, "Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times," Ligonier Ministries, August 24, 2010.

became and remained the primary pastoral care text for the church until Martin Bucer's *Concerning the True Care of Souls*.[37]

For Gregory of Nazianzus, the pastoral role, which he referred to as the guiding of humanity, was considered by him to be the ultimate field of study in both the arts and the sciences. Gregory portrayed why he came to this conclusion by comparing the pastoral role to that of a physician, contrasting the two by seeing the pastor as a physician of the soul and the other a physician of the body. The latter works with a body which is "perishable failing matter, which absolutely must be dissolved and undergo its fate" not being able to arise above its limitations in an ultimate sense (even if aided to do so for a time by medical intervention).[38] The physician of the soul, on the other hand, is concerned with that which is divine and comes from God "and partakes of the heavenly nobility, and presses on to it, even if it be bound by an inferior nature."[39] The task of doctoring the soul is seen as more difficult than the task of doctoring the body (as difficult as this may be at times, Gregory notes), for in dealing with the soul one is dealing with "the diagnosis and cure of our habits, passions, lives, wills, and whatever else is within us, by banishing from our compound nature everything brutal and fierce, and introducing and establishing in their stead what is gentle and dear to God."[40] For

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[37] Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 10.

[38] Gregory Nazianzus, "In Defence of His Flight to Pontus," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 208-209.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

these reasons, Gregory suggests that the work of the pastor far exceeds in toil and worth the work of the physician of the body.[41]

Gregory of Nazianzus puts beautifully the work of a pastor as follows:

> But the scope of our art is to provide the soul with wings, to rescue it from the world and give it to God, and to watch over that which is in His image, if it abides, to take it by the hand, if it is in danger, or restore it, if ruined, to make Christ to dwell in the heart by the Spirit: and, in short, to deify, and bestow heavenly bliss upon, one who belongs to the heavenly host.[42]

The goal of pastoral work as suggested here by Gregory of Nazianzus is that of "salvation and sanctification of a person."[43] In order to do this work of cleansing others, a "man must himself be cleansed . . . himself become wise, that he may make others wise; become light, and then give light: draw near to God, and so bring others near; be hallowed, then hallow them."[44] To be worthy of this pastoral call, and to carry it out effectively, the pastor must first present his or herself to God as a living sacrifice. Nazianzus writes:

> how could I dare to offer to Him the external sacrifice, the antitype of the great mysteries, or clothe myself with the garb and name of priest, before my hands had been consecrated by holy works; before my eyes had been accustomed to gaze safely upon created things, with wonder only for the Creator, and without injury to the creature; before my ear had been sufficiently opened to the instruction of the Lord, and He had opened mine ear to hear without heaviness, and had set a golden earring with precious sardius, that is, a wise man's word in an obedient ear; before my mouth had been opened to draw in the Spirit, and opened wide to be filled with the spirit of speaking mysteries and doctrines; and my lips bound, to use the words of wisdom, by divine knowledge, and, as I would add, loosed in due season: before my tongue had been filled with exultation, and become an instrument of Divine melody, awaking with glory, awaking right early, and laboring till it cleave to my jaws: before my feet had been set upon the rock, made

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[41] Ibid., 209.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 17.

[44] Nazianzus, "In Defence of His Flight to Pontus," 219.

> like hart's feet, and my footsteps directed in a godly fashion so that they should not well-nigh slip, nor slip at all; before all my members had become instruments of righteousness, and all mortality had been put off, and swallowed up of life, and had yielded to the Spirit?[45]

A pastor needs, before he or she is able to pastor (at least properly or effectively) to present himself or herself to God, learn of God, be in communion with God through the Spirit, and have a firm foundation in God under his or her feet.

In regard to the character of a pastor, Gregory the Great, in his *Pastoral Care*, notes that the pastor must die to the passions of the flesh and lead a spiritual life. The pastor is to be "quickly moved by a compassionate heart to forgive" while "in the affection of his own heart he sympathizes with the frailties of others . . . He so studies to live as to be able to water the dry hearts of others with the streams of instruction imparted. By his practice and experience of prayer he has learned already that he can obtain from the Lord what he asks for."[46] In summarizing the opening chapters of Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*, Purves states that those "who would be faithful in the work of pastoral care (are) faced with a concern for the state of his or her own soul and the quality of his or her own life before God."[47] For the pastor realizes the connection between the life of his or her own soul and their ability to tend the souls of others; without properly watering their own soul the pastor will not be able to water the dry hearts (souls) of others.

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[45] Nazianzus, "In Defence of His Flight to Pontus," 223-224.

[46] St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, trans. Henry Davis (New York, NY: Newman Press, 1950), 38-39.

[47] Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 67.

In line with what has just been mentioned, Gregory identifies eight essential characteristics for those who would be pastors, seeing that the conduct of a pastor needs to exceed the conduct of the people he or she pastors; it is essential that the pastor maintain a righteous life. Gregory writes that it is therefore necessary that a pastor be

> pure in thought, exemplary in conduct, discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech, in sympathy a near neighbour to everyone, in contemplation exalted above all others, a humble companion to those who lead good lives, erect in his zeal for righteousness against the vices of sinners.[48]

A further important insight given by Gregory the Great is his recognition of the importance of the balance to be held by the pastor between their inner life and external life. Gregory writes of the pastor: "He must not be remiss in his care for the inner life by preoccupation with the external; nor must he in his solicitude for what is internal, fail to give attention to the external."[49] Gregory recognizes the importance for both and the ill-effect that an imbalance between the two (in either direction) would be detrimental to the work of a pastor.

In reflecting upon Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, Thomas Oden picks up on some of the other aspects of this classical work when he writes: "(Gregory) teaches his readers how to become proper physicians of souls, able to recognize different spiritual diseases and to suit the treatment to the various cases so as to guide the soul toward spiritual health, toward happiness and wholeness, toward sanctification and fulfillment."[50]

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[48] St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, 45.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Oden and Browning, *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition*, 59.

Martin Bucer sees the role of a pastor as one who is ordained to the care of souls, as that of making sure the people of God are both shown and provided that which the Lord Jesus Christ has promised them; this is to be done in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. This involves, for Bucer, gathering in those of Christ's lambs who are "still straying from his flock," ensuring that those who have already been brought into the flock remain in and if they do stray to bring them back in again, and thirdly, protecting those who "stay with the flock against all temptations and afflictions, and helping them again if they fall prey to them."[51] Bucer sums this all up by stating that the pastoral role is to see that God's people "are deprived of nothing which contributes to their continual growth and increase in godliness."[52]

Considering this role of the pastor, Bucer notes that there are five main tasks that are needed in the pastoral office for the true care of souls to take place. They are:

> First: to lead to Christ our Lord and into his communion those who are still estranged from him, whether through carnal excess or false worship. Secondly: to restore those who had once been brought to Christ and into his church but have been drawn away again through the affairs of the flesh or false doctrine. Thirdly: to assist in the true reformation of those who while remaining in the church of Christ have grievously fallen and sinned. Fourthly: to re-establish in true Christian strength and health those who, while persevering in the fellowship of Christ and not doing anything particularly or grossly wrong, have become somewhat feeble and sick in the Christian life. Fifthly: to protect from all offence and falling away and continually encourage in all good things those who stay with the flock and in Christ's sheep-pen without grievously sinning or becoming weak and sick in their Christian walk.[53]

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[51] Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, trans. by Peter Beale (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 69-70.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

Purves notes that the two roles of the pastoral office according to Bucer are evangelism (bringing in those who are not yet in the flock) and caring for those already in the flock in such a way that they may grow in godliness; these two elements include the restoring of those who have strayed. Purves writes, in reflecting on the work of Bucer: "Pastoral work consists of seeking the lost and guiding the faithful through ministries of teaching, exhorting, warning, disciplining, comforting, pardoning, and reconciling people to God."[54] According to Bucer, it is through proper teaching admonition, and counsel that growth comes in the Christian life. This ministry, which is a ministry of caring for the souls of others, above all else, needs to be a ministry of love."[55]

Thomas Oden sums up his contemporary pastoral theology well by stating that life in Christ is the center of all pastoral activity.[56] People need to be ministered unto in the circumstances of their lives with the love of God as found in Jesus Christ.[57] The "ministry that is not assumed by Jesus Christ is the ministry that is not healed," writes Andrew Purves, "but that languishes in the pride of our own attempts to storm heaven."[58] Pastoral work needs Jesus Christ at its center, for this ministry is built upon the grace of God in Christ; when it is built upon human striving it leads to failure and fatigue – pastoral burnout.[59] Cary Peterson suggests that evangelical pastors in North America are

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[54] Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 87-94.

[55] Ibid., 94.

[56] Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, 3.

[57] Andrew Purves, *The Crucifixion of Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 129-131.

[58] Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), ix.

[59] Ibid., xvi.

"losing their ability or willingness to lead churches and are looking for a way out."[60] Cary states that 70% of pastors, due to stress, are regularly considering leaving their ministry; 45% are dealing with significant burnout or depression; and only 23% claim to be happy with who they are in Christ, in church, and in their home.[61] Viola and Barna note that "the pastoral office has a way of chewing up many who come within its parameters. Depression, burnout, stress, and emotional breakdown occur at abnormally high rates among pastors."[62]

Given the confusion of the pastoral role to the extent that a pastor is a jack of all trades who ends up working over 50 hours/week – there is a need to return the pastoral role to one of caring for the souls of others by first also caring for one's own soul. If pastors would allow themselves (and be allowed by the people they pastor) to focus on their own soul care through such things as the spiritual disciplines, and the soul care of others through the lived proclamation of the gospel primarily (consummated in the Shema, Shabbat and shalom as exhibited in the life of Jesus, the Good Shepherd) pastors would be more fulfilled in their calling and less likely to be overly stressed as they would no longer be divided in their role or in their purpose. Not only would this afford more efficient and healthy pastors, but also more effective and healthy churches. There needs to be a shift in contemporary thought in regard to the training of pastors to be leaders, scholars, and counsellors who match up to the secular expectation of such roles. Pastors need to be trained in the gospel, in the proclamation of that gospel to the building up of

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[60] Cary S. Peterson, "Burnout and the Gospel," 3.

[61] Ibid., 3-4.

[62] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 137-138.

God's people to spiritual maturity, and the development of their own souls to spiritual maturity for its own sake and the sake of spiritually developing others.

A Call to Return to Shepherd Leadership

There is a need to get back to the basics when it comes to the pastoral office within the body of Christ, for there has been an exchange take place at great cost. Some have suggested that it is even to the point of a heresy within the evangelical church – that the role of the pastor as shepherd called by God has been traded for secular skills and abilities; this in itself is the cause, at least in part, of the pastoral burnout mentioned above.[63] David Fisher writes:

> What is most curious to me is that evangelicals unquestioningly embrace nontheological ministry models. Some move the model to therapeutic and others to management models of ministry. In either case, evangelicals tend to think of both the church and ministry in human terms, and on reflective immanence. It is ironic that the liberal theological agenda that centered in anthropology and featured immanence is now implicitly championed by conservatives. The result is, more often than not, a failure of theological – biblical integration and, at the heart of it, a base for ministry that is not properly biblical or theological. Yet a pastoral ministry equipped and empowered for this generation must have a proper biblical and theological base. Methodology without a proper base is dangerous and ultimately powerless.[64]

Contemporary pastoral ministry has become the victim of secularism entering the church, images of pastoral leadership being borrowed from secular culture as opposed to Scripture. [65] It is not odd for a pastor's job description (written or implied) to include being a musician of sorts, a teacher, administrator, CEO, counsellor, community

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[63] Wagner, *Escape from the Church, Inc.*, 17.

[64] Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul*, 9-11.

[65] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 55.

organizer, and even the custodian or facilities manager.[66] One evangelical pastor put it this way: "It seems to me that everyone has a leash around the pastor's neck except the Lord."[67] Thomas Oden, honing in specifically on pastoral counselling, states that this field need not be ashamed of its achievements, but "it cannot boast of its biblical grounding, historical awareness, or theological clarity."[68] "The ministry of the clergy," states Purves, "is in a state of deep and damaging confusion. . . . Many clergy today suffer from a plummeting sense of personal self-respect and an acute loss of professional identity and satisfaction."[69] Willimon suggests that "one of the challenges for ordained ministry is to find those metaphors for ministry that allow us appropriately to embody the peculiar vocation of Christian leadership. Uncritically borrowing from the culture's images of leadership can be the death of specifically *Christian* leaders."[70]

Timothy Witmer asks the question: "If the biblical material is clear that elders are to be shepherds and that the office of elder has been established by the Lord to care for the flock in a partnership of plurality and parity, why is there so much confusion about this in the church today?"[71] Witmer notes that there is also additional first century material, outside of the biblical material, which confirms the continuation of plurality of

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[66] Andrew Purves, *The Search for Compassion*, 13.

[67] Wagner, *Escape from Church, Inc.*, 21.

[68] Oden and Brown, *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition*, 40.

[69] Purves, *The Search for Compassion*, 13-14.

[70] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 55.

[71] Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 45.

elder leadership within the early church – noting as an example Clement's Epistle.[72] Thomas Lindsay, in *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, states that

> before the close of the first century bodies of presbyters existed as ruling colleges in Christian congregations over a great part of the Roman Empire. The Epistle of Clement proves this for the Roman Church. The First Epistle of Peter proves it for Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The Apocalypse confirms the proof for Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The Acts of the Apostles adds its confirmation for Ephesus and Jerusalem.[73]

"The work of the elders in the first century," states Witmer, "was shepherding the local flocks of believers in their respective locations."[74] There has been a drift within church history away from this biblical pattern of leadership, or perhaps more of a wandering back and forth from the biblical pattern. The biblical pattern was, again, shepherd leadership by a plurality of elders.

Just as the pastoral role was central to the ongoing life of the early churches in the Christian movement, so it is today.[75] In order to ensure the continued effectiveness of the pastoral role, the ministry model of this role must be based on a biblical rationale. While the Bible may not be a detailed book of church order, Whitmer notes that "the Lord has provided clear principles designed to guide his church for its ongoing health and growth, particularly with regard to the nature and functions of church leaders. The concept of the leader as a shepherd is a theme with deep roots in God's written revelation with its

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[72] Ibid., 46.

[73] Thomas Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (New York, NY: G. Doran, 1902), 163.

[74] Witmer, *Shepherd Leadership*, 48.

[75] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 22.

foundations in the Old Testament and fulfillment in the New."[76] Oden emphasises that it was Christ's intention that the future ministries of the Church would continue to embody his own ministry in the world. If we attempt "to define ministry apart from Christ's ministry, we would be like thirsty leaves cut off from the branch (John 15:1-5)."[77]

> The God of Scripture chooses regularly to engage humans in the task of leadership. Appointment by God implies calling, stewardship and accountability. (The promise in Jeremiah 3:15) also speaks of a capacity to care for God's flock with self-sacrificing diligence and compassion. It's not just 'heart', however, but '*after my own* heart' that matters. A good shepherd is one who sees what the Owner sees and does what the Owner does. He is a follower *before* he is a leader. He is a leader *because* he is a follower. The shepherds whom God judges in the Bible are those who forget that the people in their care are not their own. Finally, the promised shepherds (Jeremiah 3:15) are those who will lead 'with knowledge and understanding'. A shepherd needs God's heart, but also a sharp godly mind. The challenges of leadership require deep reservoirs of discernment and wisdom. This kind of 'knowledge and understanding' comes, in part, from an awareness of the mission and destiny of this flock. Shepherd leaders are anchored theologically in the historic journey of God's people in their various wildernesses.[78]

With an understanding as to what the pastoral role has morphed into through church history (with accounts of a corrective being found in the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory the Great and Martin Bucer), coupled with the biblical foundation laid out in the previous chapter, it is time to direct attention to how this now plays out in the current pastoral role within evangelicalism. The following chapter will look at the Shema, Shabbat and Shalom in shepherd leadership, with practical examples being given as to how an ongoing biblical corrective can be applied to the contemporary pastoral role within the evangelical church.

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[76] Whitmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 9.

[77] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 50.

[78] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 22.

CHAPTER 4:

A RETURN TO SHEMA, SHABBAT AND SHALOM IN SHEPHERD LEADERSHIP

A Pastor's Passion: Living the Shema

Os Guinness writes:

> The very fact we desire is proof that we are creatures. We're incomplete in ourselves, so we desire whatever we think is beckoning to complete us.
>
> We're therefore right to desire happiness but wrong to think that happiness may be found wherever our desires lead us. Only the true God can satisfy desire, for God alone needs nothing outside himself; he himself is the highest and the only lasting good. So all objects we desire, short of God, are either false (because they're unreal) or as finite and incomplete as we are ourselves – and therefore disappointing, if we make them the objects of ultimate desire.
>
> True satisfaction and real rest can be found only in the highest and most lasting good, so all seeking short of the pursuit of God brings only restlessness. As St. Augustine confessed to him, 'You have made us only for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.'[1]

Chris Webb, in *God Soaked Life*, shares a foundational principle in regards to passion or desire. He notes that God's fundamental nature, his essence, is love. Webb then makes the correlation that when God created humanity in His image and likeness he imparted this same foundational nature or essence into humanity.[2] Webb writes: "Love is the raw matter of our spirit, our inner person, as surely as atoms are the raw matter of the body."[3] The issue is that "we are corrupted lovers," our spirits having "warped, twisted, broken, depraved, sometimes collapsed or shattered."[4] This means, in essence, that no

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[1] Lynda L. Graybeal and Julia L. Roller, *Prayer and Worship: A Spiritual Formation Guide* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2007), 4.

[2] Chris Webb, *God Soaked Life: Discovering a Kingdom Spirituality* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017), 37.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

human being is loveless or unloving, but rather all are operating out of corrupted or depraved love (prior to conversion, at least).

For the sake of their own health and vitality, today's evangelical pastor needs to find him or herself once again in the arena of operating out of the space of healed loved – being loved by God, loving God, and loving others. This will require a transition in priorities and purpose. Rather than seeking the approval of people or of approaching ministry for the purpose of offering something out of human ingenuity or effort, the pastor's number one priority and driving purpose will be in fulfilling the Shema. Interestingly, the opening words of the Shema are a call for God's people to "hear" the words of God. Evangelicals are known as being word-centered, and a large part of the evangelical pastors' job is to teach or preach the word. So, in looking at the evangelical pastors' call to live the Shema, a great example of one way this can be practically considered is in his/her approach to the Word of God.

When it comes to biblical interpretation (hermeneutics), the desired outcome is to hold in balance what Leslie Hardin refers to as the "two aspects of the Word of God: its historical context and its contemporary significance."[5] Two other terms to describe these two poles in biblical interpretation are exegesis and application. Both are necessary, and the further people are removed from the text of Scripture, "the more necessary it becomes to orient ourselves to the author's culture, language, historical background, and readership in order to get a proper grasp on his intended meaning" for application in contemporary situations.[6] This piece of application is crucially important as the Bible was

[5] Leslie Hardin, "Searching for a Transformative Hermeneutic," in *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* (Spring 2012): 144.

[6] Ibid.

never intended to be an end in and of itself.[7] Rather, the Bible was intended to bring people to an encounter with God which would then be lived out in real time. [8] Central to the Bible's message in this regard is the "reality of God's *self*-communication to us in Jesus Christ, in whom there has become incarnate, not some created intermediary between God and the world, but the very Word who eternally inheres in the Being of God and is God, so that for us to know God in Jesus Christ is really to know him as he is in himself."[9] Miroslav Volf notes: "At the center of Christian theology and Christian life in general is Jesus Christ, God's self utterance to humanity . . .. The Bible is the primary and critical link of all subsequent generations to Jesus Christ. For Christians, Jesus Christ is the content of the Bible, and just for that reason the Bible is the site of God's self-revelation."[10] The current reader of the Bible is invited into the self-revelation of God given through the Word, and invited to essentially listen in to the communication from a living and personal God.[11]

A proper engagement with the Bible is critical in the business of living the Christian life, and yet ranks high among one of the most neglected aspects. Richard Foster explains that it is not that Christians do not own and read their Bibles, nor is it that

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[7] Bruce K. Waltke, *The Dance between God and Humanity: Reading the Bible Today as the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 9.

[8] John Piper, "Reading the Bible in Prayer and Communion with God," in *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible's Origin, Reliability, and Meaning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 48.

[9] Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishing, 1982), 23.

[10] Miroslav Volf, *Captive to the Word of God: Engaging the Scriptures for Contemporary Theological Reflection* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 6.

[11] James M. Houston, "Toward a Biblical Spirituality," in *The Act of Bible Reading: A Multi-disciplinary Approach to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 149.

they do not believe what their Bibles tell them as the Word of God. What is missing is the reading of Scripture formatively – "reading in order to live."[12] What is needed is a reading of the Word of God that brings the message of the Word of God to the centre of one's life, giving them a "relationship with the One whose Word it is" as opposed to simply providing the reader with "certain historical facts that seem to have little relevance to our life today."[13] Again, a balance is needed between historical context and contemporary significance, or between exegesis and application.

A couple of assumptions being made in the context of this section include a belief in biblical authority, generally meaning that the "texts of the Bible are Christian Scriptures given by God for the sake of human redemption and salvation."[14] Central to the Bible's authority (canonicity) is its' inspiration; while written by human beings, the Bible is also a book inspired by the Triune God. The Bible has what J. I. Packer refers to as "a divinely effected uniqueness comparable to the uniqueness of the person of the incarnate Lord. As Jesus Christ was totally human and totally divine, so is the Bible."[15] Further, the Bible is therefore to be read "as a God-given rule of belief and behaviour – that is, of faith and life."[16]

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[12] Eugene Peterson, *Eat this Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), xi.

[13] Alan Reynolds, *Reading the Bible for the Love of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 20.

[14] L. Gregory Jones, "Formed and Transformed by Scripture: Character, Community, and Authority in Biblical Interpretation," in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 29.

[15] J. I. Packer, "Reading the Bible Theologically," in *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible's Origin, Reliability, and Meaning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 31.

[16] Ibid.

In the preface of his book, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind*, Tremper Longman III notes that in the experience of many when it comes to Bible reading the excitement wears off and something about it goes dry.[17] John Piper states that "it is possible to read the Bible without enjoying communion with God."[18] This calls into question another element in the proper engagement with Scripture. Not only must Scripture be read formatively, but it ought also to be experiential and engaging. According to Longman, the potential of the Holy Bible is that it can "enkindle the character of Christ within us," igniting the human soul.[19] This is to read the Bible in communion with the Triune God. The Bible invites the reader into this communion with God not simply to inform but to transform the reader, as Longman states in speaking of the Holy Scriptures: "the Word of God is the single most powerful agent for transforming a life."[20] Longman later refers to the Word of God as "the bedrock for spiritual growth, a divinely given resource for positive change in our lives."[21] Why (or how) is this? It is because when God speaks to the reader through the Bible, the reader encounters God in the pages of Holy Scripture.[22]

At this point it may be helpful to look very briefly at Bible reading historically, and how it is that the Bible came to be read in such a way that a balance between

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[17] Tremper Longman III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), 11.

[18] Piper, "Reading the Bible in Prayer and Communion with God," 48.

[19] Longman, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind*, 12.

[20] Ibid., 18.

[21] Ibid., 23.

[22] Ibid., 39-40.

exegesis and application is in need of being restored. As early as the fourth century onwards there was a shift in the way the Bible was read due to the alliance between church and state which occurred at that time.[23]

Prior to Christendom, the Apostolic Fathers used Scripture to articulate a rule of faith, in part to combat heretical claims.[24] "The rule of faith, particularly as articulated by Irenaeus and Tertullian," notes Pietersen, "presupposed the entire biblical narrative with the Gospels occupying a central place in that narrative."[25] Within medieval exegesis, there was a fourfold level of interpretation, recited in the following Latin verse:

Littera gesta docet; quid credas allegoria.
Moralis quid aga, sed quid speres, anagoge.[26]

The literal sense referred to either facts, deeds or events. The allegorical sense spoke to beliefs derived from the text for application to the life of the church. The moral sense, then, spoke "of the meaning of the text for the life of the individual Christian in distinction from the ecclesiastical or allegorical sense."[27] Lastly, the anagogical dealt primarily with the mystical life of the individual believer as well as with the eschatological events of the kingdom of God.[28] What is interesting in this time period is the multiple complex senses which Scripture carried as opposed to a single meaning. James Houston states that "the church's premodern interpretations presumed Scripture's

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[23] Lloyd Pietersen, *Reading the Bible After Christendom* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2012), 22-23.

[24] Ibid., 38.

[25] Ibid., 41.

[26] Houston, "Toward a Biblical Spirituality," 162.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

multivalence which was exemplified in the medieval 'fourfold' approach to interpretation."[29] Come time of the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s, the fourfold level of interpretation utilized in medieval exegesis was reduced to two by Martin Luther: the historical-literal and the spiritual. Writing in the 1990s, James Houston lamented that there was only left one level of interpretation, the historical-critical.[30]

In 2011, Joel Green stated: "Practically speaking, less than a generation ago in biblical studies the only game in town was historical-critical inquiry of the biblical texts."[31] The concern with the historical-critical method being the only game in town is, as Walter Wink notes, "historical biblical criticism is bankrupt." It is not bankrupt, notes Wink, because it no longer has things to say but "solely because it is incapable of achieving what most of its practitioners considered its purpose to be: so to interpret the Scriptures that the past becomes alive and illumines our present with new possibilities for personal and social transformation."[32] (This is in line with the purpose of the Shema).

Historical biblical criticism, while answering many questions around the text has failed to provide the transformative application of the biblical text through its methods. Perhaps this in part has lead to a new generation in the second decade of the 21st century exploring both old and new ways of doing biblical interpretation. Part of what is happening, notes Green, is that theological interpretation is "moving into the limelight after hundreds of years of shadowy exile from academic biblical and theological

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[29] Jones, "Formed and Transformed by Scripture," 29-30.

[30] Houston, "Toward a Biblical Spirituality," 166.

[31] Joel Green, *Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 1.

[32] Walter Wink, *The Bible and Human Transformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 1-2.

studies."[33] This return of theology to biblical interpretation has been a vitally important move for, as J. I. Packer stated, "how unstable, unchurchly and indeed un-Christian a thing is Bible study without theological ballast . . . theology illuminates the height and the depth and breadth, doctrinal, ethical, devotional and apologetic, of Bible reading."[34] As was stated earlier, a balance is needed between exegesis and application, meaning historical biblical criticism still has much to offer on the interpretation side. Miroslav Volf articulates this well when he writes:

> a merely historical reading of biblical texts is in danger of turning into a self-referential study of inconsequential cultural artifacts from the distant past of a then insignificant corner of the world. . . I do not mean to say that we should *not* study the Bible as a text from the past, but rather that such study of the Bible will be culturally and socially consequential largely to the extent to which the Bible is also and primarily read as Scripture, which is to say for its contemporary import.[35]

Given that the Bible is a text written at specific times and places, studying it as a document from the past is both appropriate and necessary, with its' interpretation being taken against the backdrop of historical economy, culture and politics of the day. Yet the Bible is also a book which, arguably, has God as its main character and is primarily about God's involvement with human beings in the world. The Bible can also, therefore, be appropriately read as a narration of happenings in the relationship between humanity and God, and it is important to understand accurately what took place and how it was understood in its context. Theological reading takes this one step further, adding the

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[33] Green, *Practicing Theological Interpretation*, 3.

[34] J. I. Packer, "Theology & Bible Reading," in *The Act of Bible Reading: A Multi-disciplinary Approach to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 66.

[35] Volf, *Captive to the Word of God*, 11.

application piece by tending to the "bearing those past happenings have on what needs to happen here and now."[36]

A theological hermeneutic looks then at the bearing of Scripture on both the formation of individual believers and on the ecclesial community, taking the Bible "not only as a historical or literary document but also as a source of divine revelation and an essential partner in the task of theological reflection."[37] Packer makes an important point in the theological interpretation of Scripture which brings together exegesis and application when he states that "theology is for doxology, that is, glorifying God by praise and thanks, by obedient holiness, and by laboring to extend God's kingdom, church, and cultural influence."[38] He goes on to note that the "goal of theological Bible reading is not just to know truth about God (though one's own quest for godliness must start here) but to know God personally in a relationship that honors him."[39]

Along with the return to a theological interpretation of Scripture in recent years, Leslie Hardin identifies correctly that there has also been a return to the spiritual reading of Scripture, in part, she claims, as a result of the weaknesses of the previously dominant historical critical method. Yet Hardin also recognizes this does not require a dismissing of the historical critical method altogether, for she finds both approaches (historical critical and spiritual) necessary. Hardin writes: "One gets me to the historical realities of the ancient world while the other affords ancient authors opportunities to speak in the

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[36] Volf, *Captive to the Word of God*, 16-17.

[37] Green, *Practicing Theological Interpretation*, 5.

[38] Packer, "Reading the Bible Theologically," 34-35.

[39] Ibid.

modern."[40] Adam McClendon provides a great understanding and definition of a spiritual hermeneutic of Scripture in his article "Defining the Role of the Bible in Spirituality;" he writes:

> Biblical spirituality is the process of Christian spirituality rooted in the normative standard of God's Word. Biblical spirituality is a lived response to how God has revealed himself in his Word. Moreover, it is also a response to how one has experienced God and validated that experience in light of the Word. Thus, biblical spirituality involves an understanding of and experience with God under the direction of and in submission to the Holy Spirit as rooted in the normative standard of God's Word.[41]

In his book, *All Roads Lead to the Text*, Dean Deppe notes in his chapter on spiritual reading how certain spiritual disciplines "can enable one to approach the text of Scripture with an attitude of trust and obedience to receive personal formation, practical applications, and the facilitation of an encounter with God."[42] The first step Deppe notes in spiritual reading is the need to approach the text reverently (in faith), humbly and receptively – "expecting to receive a word from God."[43] The next piece in spiritual reading is a response from the word received. In spiritual reading, then, there is both the importance of correctly understanding the Bible's meaning (historical-critical method) and what is understood of God's relation to humanity in the text (theological interpretation), followed by seeking an experience of the Word of God in one's own life which includes appropriate response. John Piper articulates it this way: "we must pause to

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[40] Hardin, "Searching for a Transformative Hermeneutic," 145.

[41] Adam McClendon, "Defining the Role of the Bible in Spirituality," in *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* (Fall 2012): 221.

[42] Dean B. Deppe, *All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 262.

[43] Ibid., 268-269.

contemplate what we understand and, by the Spirit, to feel and express the appropriate response of the heart."[44]

Piper brings up an important piece in biblical interpretation, which must also involve application: the heart. Peter Adam states that this polarity of mind and heart is one of the most powerful assumptions in our world, evident in the separating of our lives into two areas, "one to be governed by the mind (what we think), and the other to be governed by the heart (what we feel). We assume that matters of the mind cannot be emotional, and matters of the heart cannot be intellectual, that the mind must always be dispassionate, and the heart irrational." [45] Adam argues that this dichotomy is both incorrect and harmful when it comes to biblical interpretation, as both mind and heart are needed for this task. Almost universally, the assumption has been that spirituality is of the heart and not the mind. This has resulted in spirituality tending to be "consciously untheological," valuing the intuitive over the rational, accompanied with a disassociation with words due to a fear that they will "import an unhelpful rationality."[46] The task at hand, then, in fostering a spiritual hermeneutic is to overcome this heart-mind polarity – allowing truth to be passionately felt and the emotion to be grounded in intellect. For, as Adam correctly states, "the Bible is both an intellectual document (it contains ideas), and an emotional document (those ideas are expressed emotionally)."[47] Adam concludes, therefore, that a "robust understanding of the power of words should mean that the heart-

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[44] Piper, "Reading the Bible in Prayer and Communion with God," 48.

[45] Adam, *Hearing God's Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality*, 162.

[46] Ibid., 163.

[47] Ibid.

mind polarity is rejected as perpetuating a false dichotomy, that the full impact of the words on the whole person is recognized. If this is true of usual human communication, it will also be true of God's words, which come with divine power."[48] This is a key component in reading the Bible for formation (application/response) as opposed to reading it simply for information.

To read the bible spiritually/experientially is to read it not solely for information, nor as a self-help book, but rather for transformation. Again, here as well, as noted throughout, this is not an either-or, but both. Susan Muto states that there is a time and place for both informational reading and formational reading – "but one way should not be substituted or forgotten in favor of the other. It is possible to approach the same book informationally and formationally."[49] Informational reading "seeks to cover as much as possible as quickly as possible so as to . . . get the data needed to do what must be done."[50] Informational reading also seeks to master the text, bringing it under the readers' control which leads to an imposing of the readers' agenda on the text, thus determining a response which fits their preferences.[51] Informational reading also treats the sacred text of Scripture as an object out there, therefore keeping oneself at a distance from the text.[52] This prevents the encounter or communion with God which experiential or spiritual

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[48] Adam, *Hearing God's Words*, 165.

[49] Susan Muto, "The Art and Discipline of Formative Reading: Revisiting Holy Scripture with Humble Receptivity," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* (Spring 2012): 101.

[50] M. Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2000), 51.

[51] Ibid., 52.

[52] Ibid.

reading is after. Another aspect of informational reading can be the reading of the Bible as a self-help book. Richard Foster notes that in reading the Bible for information, a "second common objective people have for studying the Bible is to find some formula that will solve the pressing need of the moment."[53] The concern with reading the Bible this way, notes Foster, is similar to that of reading the Bible for information: it leaves "us or someone else *in charge*. Reading the Bible this fashion is in fact a way of trying to control what comes out of the Bible rather than entering the process of the transformation of our whole person and of our whole life into *Christlikeness*."[54]

Formational reading requires a transition, and openness in our reading. Openness to personal involvement with God is the "corrective for a basically informational approach to the Scripture. . .. Such involvement is far more than an intellectual assent to religious or theological concepts."[55] Formational reading is concerned with quality over quantity – deep reading that allows the text to master the one reading;[56] formational reading also leads the reader in an ever-deepening relationship with God.[57] In approaching the Bible formationally, Luke Timothy Johnson makes a wonderful observation when he notes that it makes all the difference in the world whether we think someone is dead or alive in our seeking to learn about that person. "When we think someone is alive," writes Johnson, "we have a completely different set of

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[53] Richard Foster, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008), 5.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word*, 54-55.

[56] Ibid., 55-57.

[57] Alan Reynolds, *Reading the Bible for the Love of God*, 16.

expectations…When someone is still living and we are in relationship with that person, our knowledge of that person is more multiform than in the case of someone dead."[58] The Jesus to whom all Scripture points is alive; this ought to cause the reader to have an experience of the living Christ in the Word of God. Furthermore, as Johnson instructs, if Jesus is alive, biblical interpretation is no longer a matter of investigating a historical record but rather an opportunity to continue to learn not about Jesus but *from* Jesus: "what we learn about him must therefore include what we continue to learn *from* him."[59]

L. Gregory Jones believes that in recent years there has been a loss of this understanding of Scripture – that the words of the Bible are the central text "in the formation of Christian character and identity," meant to shape both our minds and bodies through an experiential engagement which both informs ones' mind and transforms ones' heart. [60] Readers who remain detached in their reading of Scripture, lacking the humble receptivity and belief that Jesus is alive and the Word is powerful, will likely remain unchanged by the words on the page. "The call of Scripture," exclaims Jones, "is for us to be open to the transformation of our own lives and to see the necessity of such transformation."[61] The goal of transformative Bible study, notes Pietersen, "assumes that when we come to the text we hear the word of God addressed to us personally. A word that summons us to a response…The goal is to come out of such an encounter with the

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[58] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 3-4.

[59] Ibid., 4-5.

[60] L. Gregory Jones, "Formed and Transformed by Scripture," 19.

[61] Ibid., 31.

text, changed and equipped for the ongoing journey of becoming more Christ-like."[62] In *Transforming Bible Study*, Walter Wink states that this form of studying the Bible involves

> exploring all the sealed and stale rooms of God's house we call our selves, and offering all that we find to the real owner for forgiveness, acceptance, and healing. It is unmasking our complicity in systems and structures of society which violate people's lives, and becoming ready agents of justice. It is discovering the unjust and violated parts of ourselves as well. It is a process, not an arriving; we are 'transforming,' not transformed. But all along the way there are flashes of insight, moments of exquisite beauty, experiences of forgiveness and of being healed, reconciliations and revelations that confirm the rightness of our quest and whet our appetites for more.[63]

Those for whom Jesus is alive, the Scriptures become a continuing revelation of the Messiah in their own time and context. There is less reason to criticize the compositions of Scripture as has been the case with the "historical Jesus questers," but rather honor the Scriptures as "indispensable enablers of the process of learning Jesus."[64]

In approaching Scripture experientially, a note of caution is that one does not want to disregard theology. J. I. Packer wisely notes: "I need informed from the church's ongoing theological life, and from theology itself, or at crucial points my understanding will fail."[65] In reading Scripture experientially, however, one must not disregard the reality that the Bible consistently demands action or response to the written Word (Matthew 7:24; 23:3).[66] In an eye opening remark, Waltke makes clear this biblical

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[62] Pietersen, *Reading the Bible After Christendom*, 202.

[63] Walter Wink, *Transforming Bible Study* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 77-78.

[64] Johnson, *Living Jesus*, 78-79.

[65] Packer, "Theology & Bible Reading," 66.

[66] Waltke, *The Dance Between God and Humanity*, 18.

expectation: "Jews were marked out by three practices: circumcision, sabbath, and kosher-laws, not by their confessions. Christians are to be marked out, says Jesus, by the way in which they love each other, not only by their confession that 'Jesus is Lord.'"[67]

Waltke goes on to make a much needed clarification about how it is that one understands Christianity. Often one thinks of Christianity as a 'faith;' within the Bible itself, however, it is described as a way – a way of life. The word faith ought to be understood as *faithfulness* to the Lord rather than a belief system.[68] This brings back to focus the point that the Bible ought not to be approached merely for information. Christianity is not (was not) ever intended to be merely cognitive – "an intellectual assent to a set of doctrinal propositions."[69] As Alan Reynolds notes, "Belief merely in propositions, dogmas, or facts is not going to make us free from sin."[70] Neither, however, is Christianity simply experiential-expressive; rather, "Christianity is a cultural-linguistic system, a practicing of the language of faith."[71]

A proper engagement with the Bible will involve reading with the mind and heart, informationally and formationally, utilizing both great exegesis and application. A proper engagement with Scripture will involve a continued learning from Jesus, not simply about Jesus; it will also involve a response to the call to be formed into Christlikeness in one's daily actions. Eugene Peterson stated that "to read the Scriptures adequately and

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[67] Waltke, *The Dance Between God and Humanity*, 19.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Marva J. Dawn, "Practiced Theology – Lived Spirituality," in *For All the Saints: Evangelical Theology and Christian Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 138.

[70] Reynolds, *Reading the Bible for the Love of God*, 39.

[71] Marva J. Dawn, "Practiced Theology – Lived Spirituality," 138.

accurately, it is necessary at the same time to live them. Not to live them as a prerequisite to reading them, and not to live them in consequence of reading them, but to live them *as* we read them. . .. It means letting Another (the living Jesus) have a say in everything we are saying and doing."[72] The Bible must no longer be marginalized as an object for investigation, depersonalized as a passive object for imperious study, hindered by preconceived agendas on the part of the reader. Rather the Bible is to be approached on its own terms, accepting what it has to offer – an encounter with God. Reynolds states it well: "If we allow it to be the Word of God, the Bible questions us, challenges us, and forms our agendas."[73] With a holistic approach to Scripture as described herein, the living Jesus will continue to live through the reader of the Bible – the Shema will be formed in the reader's life.

Chris Webb speaks of sloth in an interesting way which connects with the topic at hand. He writes:

> *Sloth* was known to the ancient writers as *accidie*, the Latin adaptation of a Greek word for listless collapse of spiritual passions, and ennui of the soul. This is not love misdirected but love allowed to sleep, to fall dormant. In particular it referred to the slow cooling of our ardor for God and for the pursuit of life in his kingdom. . . It can often be seen in individuals who seem directionless and lacking in energy or fire – for their work, their community life, and particularly for their life with God.[74]

This state of being, as described by Webb, is found to be true for many evangelical pastors. Their passion dried up, they end up with a lack of love for God and then also for

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[72] Peterson, *Eat this Book*, xii.

[73] Reynolds, *Reading the Bible for the Love of God*, 18.

[74] Webb, *God Soaked Life*, 40-41.

God's people – the flock they are called to shepherd. The evangelical pastor is again in need of having their own heart ignited by the Words of God as noted above.

A central aspect of the life and ministry of Jesus as he lived the Shema as the Good Shepherd was, again, his compassion. As the evangelical pastor is ignited once again with the Word of God, recognizing the call to respond to the God who has loved him/her to the point of redemption through the shed blood of his Son by loving God with all of their heart, mind, strength, and soul – this will spill over into compassionate love for others. Reflecting upon Matthew 9:35-36, Andrew Purves describes this compassion as a ministry of presence. [75] Purves goes on to explain: "To be present for another is to be available for him or her. It is to relate to another with all of one's attention and energy. And it is to invite that other into relationship with oneself. Presence allows another to stake a claim on one's personal and private space. It is to be open to being changed by another."[76] Peterson describes well the two poles between which this compassion lives in *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Ministry* where he writes: "It is the unique property of pastoral work to combine two aspects of ministry: one, to represent the eternal word and will of God; and, two, to do it among the idiosyncrasies of the local and the personal (the actual *place* where the pastor lives; the named *people* with whom he or she lives). If either aspect is slighted, good pastoral work fails to take place."[77]

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[75] Purves, *The Search for Compassion*, 37.

[76] Ibid., 38.

[77] Eugene Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 5.

Timothy Laniak notes that "the Bible promotes robust, comprehensive shepherd leadership, characterized as much by judicious use of authority as by sympathetic expressions of compassion."[78]

> Compassion is deeply rooted in the life of God revealed to us in Jesus of Nazareth. Compassion reveals the inner nature of God. . .. Compassion is only possible for us in and through our relationship with God in Christ. Compassionate living is the result of that relationship. Through our relationship with God in Jesus Christ we inevitably continue in God's continuing compassion for the world.[79]

A Pastor's Rest: Practicing Shabbat

Richard Foster states that "there is perhaps no more appealing invitation in all the Bible than Jesus' gracious words: 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11:28)."[80] Along with the call to once again hear the Words of God and to respond in passionate love for God and compassionate care for God's people, today's evangelical pastor needs as well to learn once again what it is to rest with the God who rests.

William H. Willimon sees the commandments as a means of worship, and sees Sabbath as "the means by which true worship is possible, whereby we are commanded to the take the time that is required for the reflection, remembrance, and rest that is the prerequisite for faithful, responsive action in praise to God."[81] Foster suggests that "no

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[78] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 21.

[79] Purves, *The Search for Compassion*, 12.

[80] Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Hearts True Home* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1992), 97.

[81] William H. Willimon, *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 141.

teaching flowing out of the Sabbath principle is more important than the centrality of resting in God."[82] This leads the pastor into space in which he or she no longer needs to strive to make this or that happen, but rather puts their resting trust in Father God. This does not lead to inactivity, but rather dependant activity or responsive action. This means that "we no longer take things into our own hands" but rather "place all things into divine hands and then act out of inner promptings."[83]

Within the context of this section it will be suggested that the reintroduction of the biblical intent of Sabbath can serve as a cornerstone for recovering what has been lost – recognizing that the concept of Sabbath rest has itself been all but lost! Writing almost forty years ago, Samuele Bacchiocchi noted that the biblical notion of the Holy Sabbath was increasingly disappearing from view. [84] In 2014, Walter Brueggemann stated that "for the most part, contemporary Christians pay little attention to the Sabbath."[85] Almost all that is left of this concept in the contemporary evangelical church is an hour on Sunday morning – and for many contemporary evangelical Christians even this hour is disappearing![86] Is there a connection between the loss of spiritual depth and loss of Sabbath practice? Coupled with this question is a concern that there has also been a loss of proper understanding of the pastoral role, including the practice of Sabbath among those in pastoral ministry. Attention having been given to the pastoral role, reflections on

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[82] Foster, *Prayer*, 100.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 9.

[85] Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*, ix.

[86] Tilden Edwards, *Sabbath Time* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1992), 15.

the role of Sabbath rest as an answer to the problem facing many evangelical pastors shall now be addressed.

"Buried deep in Judeo-Christian tradition," writes Tilden Edwards, "is a rhythm of time that needs to be uncovered and offered in fresh forms today. It is a rhythm anchored in an understanding of the Sabbath."[87] The Christian Sabbath is "a practice of receptive time that both balances and permeates our active time" and as such is "a foundational spiritual discipline of the Christian life."[88] For the contemporary pastor who is so busy doing his/her multifaceted ministry activities, the practice of Sabbath has the ability to again ground them him/her in their calling. Before going any further, a brief overview of the concept of Christian Sabbath is relevant here.

Very simply put, the word Sabbath (שַׁבָּת) means to rest; within the Old Testament Scriptures it is a day of rest.[89] A fuller understanding of Sabbath, however, recognizes that it is an event which happens in time with the intent of redefining or reminding one of the nature of time and how one lives in time.[90] This dimension of time in relation to Sabbath reveals, according to Tilden Edwards, four primary purposes of the Sabbath.[91] Only the first one will be looked at here, which is that Sabbath is seen as a day of rest as evidenced in Genesis 2:1-4.[92] Walter Brueggemann notes in reference to these verses

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[87] Edwards, *Sabbath Time*, 8.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Lynne Baab, "Sabbath," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2011), 727.

[90] Dan Allender, *Sabbath* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2009), 49.

[91] The four primary purposes of Sabbath according to Edwards are: (1) the Sabbath seen as a day of rest; (2) the Sabbath as commemoration of liberation; (3) the Sabbath as a sign of the covenant; (4) the Sabbath as a sign of hope. A fuller description of these can be found in *Sabbath Time*, pages 19-21.

[92] Edwards, *Sabbath Time*, 18-19.

that it makes clear that "YHWH is not a workaholic" nor is He "anxious about the full functioning of creation" and finally that the "well-being of creation does not depend on endless work."[93] These words have the potential to speak *much* hope into the life of a pastor who is busy with *much* – putting *much time* into his or her work. In Exodus 31:14 is found the command that work is prohibited on the Sabbath. The concept of what constitutes work, Edwards points out, is not so much the activity but its purpose. If its "intent signifies human power over nature . . . then it is *meluchah*, work, which violates the restful intent of Sabbath time to recognize our dependence on God."[94] The pastor, an agent of God to bring the people of God close to God needs to recognize his/her own dependence on God! The practice of Sabbath is the most obvious way in which to accomplish this.

There is debate among contemporary evangelical Christians as to how the Sabbath is to be practiced or even if Sabbath practice is still required.[95] Is this covenant sign given to Israel, with the command to rest on the seventh day, still relevant on this side of the work of the incarnate Christ? Three predominant views held within Protestant Christianity today are: (1) the seventh-day Sabbath, (2) the Christian Sabbath, ad (3) the Sabbath as fulfilled in Christ.[96] The seventh-day Sabbath view argues that "seventh-day Sabbath observance is God's will for all Christians and points to the blessings they will

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[93] Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 8.

[94] Edwards, *Sabbath Time*, 19.

[95] Thomas Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 209.

[96] For a good overview and debate of these differing views *Perspectives on the Sabbath* (edited by Christopher John Donato) is recommended.

gain when they do." [97] This view of the Christian Sabbath allows for a transfer of Sabbath celebration/keeping from the seventh-day to the first day, or what is referred to as the Lord's Day. The third common view, which sees the Sabbath as being fulfilled in Christ, does not see the need to mandate a 24-hour period for Sabbath, but rather recognizes our rest as being found in the finished work of Christ; while this does not negate the need for rest it does remove the requirement for a legalistic approach to Sabbath requirements.

Bacchiocchi argues for the practice of the Sabbath as a holy day to be continued in practice by believers on the Lord's Day.[98] D. A. Carson, in reference to the work of Bacchiocchi, brings into the picture Matthew 11:28-30. Bacchiocchi too quickly ties together, argues Carson, the role of the Sabbath Day as a symbol in the redemptive mission of Christ without giving enough attention to what is happening in Matthew 11 and 12.[99] The Sabbath periscopes in Matthew 12 are recorded immediately following the words of Christ in Matthew 11, calling those who would to come and find rest in Him. Carson at this point notes: "As if such a juxtaposition were not enough, Matthew then carefully points out that the Sabbath conflicts occurred 'at that time' – presumably at or near the time that Jesus had spoken of His rest."[100] The New Testament scholar Craig Keener notes on Matthew 11:28-30 that

> Jesus speaks here of a figurative bondage of unprofitable labor under an inadequate understanding of God's law. . .. Jesus did not interpret the law,

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[97] Skip MacCarty, "The Seventh-Day Sabbath," in *Perspectives on the Sabbath* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 9-10.

[98] Bacchiocchi lays out his argument in great detail in his book *From Sabbath to Sunday*. These details, however, are beyond the scope of this present paper and therefore will not be included.

[99] D. A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," in *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 75.

[100] Ibid.

> including the law of rest (Mt. 12:1-14), the same way his contemporaries did; his *yoke was light*. In contrast to his opponents, Jesus interprets the laws according to their original purpose, to which he is privy – for example, interpreting Sabbath laws in terms of devotion to God rather than universal rules.[101]

This beautifully brings to the forefront a central issue in pastoral ministry: devotion to God! Note the connection to Shema as mentioned above.

Robert Sherman, in his article "Reclaimed by Sabbath Rest," writes with the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 in mind and suggests that Christians today may find space between the two ends of the spectrum – one being complete disregard for the fourth commandment and the other being what he refers to as Sabbatarianism. He feels that Christians today can be reclaimed by a proper understanding and practice of the Sabbath found in these words of Jesus: "Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30 ESV). Sherman writes: "Sabbatarianism empties Sabbath of its character as gift and blessing, making it instead a heavy burden. Jesus removes this heavy burden, exchanging it for one that is light, while offering us genuine rest."[102] Herein one finds the centrality of Jesus in pastoral ministry as noted by Thomas Oden previously.

One of the reasons that Sabbath is so important is that it sanctifies time; understanding this as one of the functions or intents of Sabbath is crucial information for the current context in which the Evangelical Church and pastors find themselves. Sabbath brings new life to the contemporary workaday world. Edwards notes that there is a

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[101] Craig Keener, *Matthew* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 222.

[102] Robert Sherman, "Reclaimed by Sabbath Rest," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 1 (January 2005): 49.

hunger within humanity "for intimacy with the mysterious divine lover of our lives" and states that this hunger "cannot be fully satisfied apart from spacious times of restful presence."[103] This concept of *presence*, for Edwards, refers to both being before and in God. This *presence* enabled in and through the practice of Sabbath rest then "compliments the intimacy that arises through our active ministries."[104] This is what Tozer would refer to as the evangelical mystic, and is a practice needed for the evangelical pastor!

In his book *The Holy Longing*, Ronald Rolheiser notes that human beings are typically not at peace. There is something inside all people which seems at odds with the world around them causing them to be forever restless. Rolheiser goes on to describe this as a fundamental dis-ease of humanity which renders each human incapable of coming to full peace in this life.[105] This results, argues Edwards, in all of one's time then becoming work time; the basic purpose of life becomes "the cultivation of a separate ego needing to fulfill itself through the accumulation of many things, material and immaterial."[106] With this as ones' focus there is no longer any Sabbath time, for whether they are at work or leisure people "are subtly working to produce, enhance, maintain," and it becomes the individual's responsibility to ensure success.[107] It is assumed that this reasoning has

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[103] Edwards, *Sabbath Time*, 8.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: the search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York, NY: Image, 2014), 3.

[106] Edwards, *Sabbath Time*, 12-13.

[107] Ibid., 13.

infiltrated the life of the evangelical pastor and the evangelical church. Brueggemann writes:

> In our own contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative. It is resistance because it is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods. . . The alternative on offer is that awareness and practice of the claim that we are situated on the receiving end of the gifts of God. To be so situated is a staggering option, because we are accustomed to being on the initiating end of all things. . .. (T)he fourth commandment on Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society, because it summons us to intent and conduct that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment.[108]

Abraham Heschel in his classic book on Sabbath, entitled *The Sabbath*, states: "Technical civilization is man's conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time. . .. The danger begins when in gaining power in the realm of space we forfeit all aspirations in the realm of time. There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be."[109] The practice of Sabbath keeping frees pastors from the circuit of trying to produce and accomplish through the varied activities placed upon them by a church which has forgotten the role of the pastor. Further, the practice of Sabbath creates the space for pastors to be reminded that their worth is not found in that which they are able to do but rather in what is in Christ. Marva Dawn writes: "When we celebrate the Sabbath . . . (we) remember that we are precious and honoured in God's sight and loved – profoundly loved – not because of what we produce."[110]

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[108] Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, xiv.

[109] Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 3.

[110] Marva Dawn, "A Systematic, Biblical Theology of Sabbath Keeping," in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1991), 177.

Sabbath time is of central importance to the pastor in a church setting which has lost a sense of deep spirituality and of being (over or against the sense of doing); it is a practice that touches all the other aspects or dimensions of the Christian life positively.[111] The pastor's Sabbath is not their day off; rather, it is his or her time in communion with God for both the sake of him or herself and those whom he or she is called to shepherd. Practicing Sabbath invites the pastor to celebrate space over time – being over doing. Heschel writes: "Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*."[112] The practice of Sabbath time can then infiltrate the rest of the pastor's time with proper telos and hence meaning. Sabbath creates the space to recognize what is beyond the business of secular time, allowing the participant to transcend secular time through the revelation that ones' time is actually an expression of God's eternal time.[113] In this space, it is assumed, pastoral failure and fatigue (burnout) would reduce significantly. "The relentless pace of contemporary society overwhelms our sense of time as God's good gift," writes Robert Sherman. "Allowing ourselves to be reclaimed by the sabbath— and its Lord, Jesus Christ— grants us a redeemed perception of time, freeing us from its tyranny and for our own truest communion with God, one another, and creation."[114] Willimon notes: "Sabbath keeping is a visible witness to the truth of the new creation begun in the resurrection of Christ. Sabbath is the publicly enacted sign of our trust that God keeps the

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[111] Edwards, *Sabbath Time*, 9.

[112] Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 10.

[113] Edwards, *Sabbath Time*, 39.

[114] Robert Sherman, "Reclaimed by Sabbath Rest," 38.

world, therefore we don't have to. . . Our taking of responsibility is always reflexive, responsive to God's prior actions."[115]

Foster extends on behalf of Christ this beautiful invitation:

> If only we could slip over into that life free from strain and anxiety and hurry! If only we could know that steady peace of God where all strain is gone and Christ is already victor over the world! If only . . . But listen, my friend, I am here to tell you that this way of living can be ours. We *can* know this reality of rest, and trust, and serenity, and firmness of life-orientation. . . Today, at this very moment, Jesus is inviting you, Jesus is inviting me, into his rest: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for you souls" (Matt. 11:29).[116]

A Pastor's Peace: Finding Shalom

As mentioned earlier, "Shalom is a function of the two greatest commandments being worked out through the life of the Church: love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:37-39)."[117] Shalom within the pastor's life will encompass a full-hearted response to the love of God which leads them into a full love of God and of neighbor (flock). Within mainline evangelicalism, doctrine (orthodoxy) is valued quite highly, but does not always translate well over into community (orthopraxy). As has been pointed out, a Jew was not defined strictly by what they believed (orthodoxy) but rather in submission to the will of God as defined in Torah (the commandments). Orthopraxy was more central to Jewish identity then orthodoxy.[118] The challenge before the evangelical pastor, beyond being connected

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[115] Willimon, *Calling and Character*, 141.

[116] Foster, *Prayer*, 97-98.

[117] Hunt, "The Gospel in 5D: Shalom Spreading."

[118] Yoder, *Shalom*, 3.

to their passion (Shema) and rest (Shabbat) in the Lord God, is to translate this into the present-day church, calling the flock of the 21st century into βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ· - shalom community.

Perry Yoder, in *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace*, notes that there are three shades to the term shalom within Scripture. Yoder instructs: "First, it can refer to a material and physical state of affairs, this being its most frequent usage. It can also refer to relationships, and here it comes closest in meaning to the English word *peace*. And finally, it also has a moral sense, which is its least frequent meaning."[119] In regard to the most frequent use of Shalom (material/physical well being), it is a concern for the physical well being of others; it is a checking in to see if someone is okay or a wishing them well.[120] We have this usage in Genesis 37:14 where Joseph is asked by his father to go and check on his brothers: "So he said to him, 'Go now, see שָׁלוֹם with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word.' So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem" (ESV). This use of the term shalom carries with it as well a "sense of being safe and sound from danger."[121] This can be seen in Jeremiah 13:14: "Then I said: "Ah, Lord GOD, behold, the prophets say to them, 'You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured שָׁלוֹם in this place'" (ESV).

Shalom, secondly, refers to peace in social relationships, including between nations (i.e. 1 Kings 5:12; Judges 4:17) or between friends (as in Jeremiah 20:10).

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[119] Yoder, *Shalom*, 11.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid., 13.

Interestingly, Yoder notes, that "just as war marked the absence of shalom between nations, injustice was the measure of the absence of shalom within a society."[122] In Isaiah 32:16-17, the fruit of righteousness is shalom:

> Then justice will dwell in the wilderness
> And righteousness will abide in the fertile field.
> And the work of righteousness will be peace,
> And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever (ESV).

The wages of righteousness, the result of the words of righteousness, will be shalom.

Thirdly, shalom is applied to the arena of the moral or ethical. In Psalm 34:14 the reader is instructed to "Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it" (ESV). To purse shalom is the opposite of pursuing what is false or evil; it is to be upright and honest in one's endeavours (see Psalm 37:37). The work of shalom, in the moral sense, is "working to remove deceit and hypocrisy and to promote honesty and integrity, and straightforwardness."[123]

Within the New Testament, this concept of shalom is continued in the word εἰρήνη. Yoder notes this word is used in much the same way as shalom – "for material or physical well-being (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 6:23), good relationships (Acts 24:2; Romans 14:19), and moral character (Romans 8:6; Galatians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:11)."[124] One significant difference, however, that Yoder notes between the concept of shalom in the Old Testament and εἰρήνη in the New Testament, is that εἰρήνη is used theologically in such ways as stating that God is a "God of peace" or speaking of the

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[122] Yoder, *Shalom*, 14.

[123] Ibid., 16.

[124] Ibid., 19.

"gospel of peace." Yoder states, however, that the theological significance of εἰρήνη comes to a peak in reference to the results of Jesus' death and resurrection. Through his death and resurrection Jesus made peace in two significant ways: first, Jesus brought peace to the relationship between humanity and God by means of justification through his blood. This was an act of love by God to his enemies. (See Romans 5:1-11). Secondly, the death of Christ also brings the possibility of peace between human beings.[125] This is easily seen in Ephesians 2:14-17, which states:

> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near (NIV).

The pastor's task in relation to shalom is multifaceted. It will include a genuine concern for the well-being of others, especially those of his or her flock to which the pastor has been called to shepherd. Secondly, the pastor will be called to live as a righteous shepherd, ensuring justice is to be found among the people of God while carrying him or herself in integrity and honesty among those he or she has been called to serve. These qualities and characteristics will be an overflow of the pastor's own reconciled relationship with God, and will be exemplified in his or her own living out of the same manner of peaceful reconciliation among God's people. It will be evidenced in an exemplified harmony in relationship between both him or herself and God and within the community of God. Within the community this will involve, as seen exemplified in Christ, the offer of wholeness to the community (as outlined by Williamson above).

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[125] Yoder, *Shalom*, 20.

Yoder states: "*Shalom makers thus strive for total reconciliation* – among people, putting an end to want, oppression, and deception; and between people and God, so that all can live in the newness of life that is the vision of shalom."[126]

The importance of applying these foundational correctives to the current pastoral role within evangelicalism in the Global North is not only for the health of the pastor but also for the health and vitality of the local church. As shown earlier, when Israel's appointed shepherds failed in personally living out and applying the Shema, Shabbat and Shalom, the people of God suffered. The following chapter will outline some of the struggles facing the current evangelical church in North America (practically and theologically) and will suggest an answer be found in the return to an authentic shepherding ministry within the evangelical church.

[126] Yoder, *Shalom*, 21.

CHAPTER 5:

A CHURCH IN NEED OF RENEWAL

> Traditional, historic Christianity – whether Catholic, Protestant, or Eastern Orthodox – ought to be a powerful counterforce to the radical individualism and secularism of modernity. . .. Even though conservative Christians were said to be fighting a culture war, with the exception of the abortion and gay marriage issues, it was hard to see my people putting up much of a fight. We seemed content to be the chaplaincy to a consumerist culture that was fast losing a sense of what it meant to be Christian.[1]

Within this chapter, the state of the contemporary evangelical church within North America will be considered – the context within which pastors in question carry out their vocational calling. While looking at statistics, analysis will be applied as to why many evangelical churches are in the state they are in, with the role of pastors in leading the charge to new territory for the evangelical church in the 21st century being taken up in the last chapter. Attention shall first be given to some characteristics of the contemporary culture in which the evangelical church finds themselves.

Converting Church

In providing a standard definition of evangelicalism, Timothy George states that it is "a movement of spiritual vitality within the Protestant tradition characterized by four distinguishing marks: conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism."[2] Roger Olson, while incorporating these four themes, structures them differently, referring to the

[1] Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York, NY: Sentinel, 2017), 1-2.

[2] Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, eds., *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2008), 13.

bipolarity of evangelicalism, as it derives from two main sources. The first is its affinity with the Reformation ideals of *sola gratia et fides* and *sola scriptura*, especially as clarified within the Puritan tradition in Great Britain and New England. Secondly, "evangelicalism is profoundly marked by commitment to the experiential ideal of what had been called *conversional piety*, which arose especially among the continental Pietists and revivalists of the Great Awakenings." [3] The interest of these two groups coincided during what has become known as the First Great Awakening (1700s), birthing evangelicalism as a "mass movement within British and American Protestantism." [4]

The two main characteristics of evangelicalism ever since have been its commitment to general Protestant orthodoxy (including primarily the authority of Scripture and the atoning death of Christ) and "the experience of conversion to Christ by repentance and faith, resulting in justification, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and an intimate, personal relationship with Christ marked by prayer, holiness of life, worship of God, and active participation in the church of God's people." [5] Presently, one of the major unfolding concerns within evangelicalism centers around the active participation in the church.

The bipolarity at the center of evangelicalism, then, has to do with doctrine and experience.[6] "That is," noted Olson, "evangelicalism is identified by commitment to

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[3] Roger Olson, "Free Church Ecclesiology and Evangelical Spirituality," in *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 165.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

orthodoxy and *orthopathy* – right belief and right experience. Of course, one could also throw in orthopraxy – right living manifested in Christ-honoring works of love and righteousness."[7] In the midst of this bipolarity is as an emphasis on the individual, the individual element (not to be confused with individualism or autonomy) being at the core of evangelicalism. Olson explains:

> To be evangelical is to have a relationship with God marked by *mediated immediacy*. Conversional piety (the experience of conversion and the resulting testimony or narration indicate a revival of seventeenth century piety) [8] may begin with a sacramental experience of God's grace . . . but it requires a personal, I-Thou encounter with God at some point after that. And that encounter cannot be automatic or wholly mediated; it must include a conscious, willing, responsible response to the divine initiative that cannot be accomplished for a person. The person must respond for himself or herself.[9]

It was during the Second Great Awakening that "the centrality of human decision and effort became especially dominant."[10] John Wolffe notes that evangelicalism "is an intensely individualistic movement, rooted in manifold distinctive personal encounters with God."[11] This is followed, then, as noted above, by active participation in the church (God's people); the decline in active church participation, as shown below, is potentially connected with the individualized understanding of conversion.

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[7] Olson, "Free Church Ecclesiology and Evangelical Spirituality," 165-166.

[8] Bruce Hindmarsh, "The Antecedents of Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography and the Christian Tradition," in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, eds. Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2008), 331.

[9] Olson, "Free Church Ecclesiology and Evangelical Spirituality," 166.

[10] Michael S. Horton, "The Church After Evangelicalism," in *Renewing the Evangelical Mission*, ed. Richard Lints (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 143.

[11] John Wolffe, "Who Are Evangelicals? A History," in *Evangelicals Around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21st Century*, eds. Brian C. Stiller, Todd M. Johnson, Karen Stiller and Mark Hutchinson (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 27.

Some other aspects of evangelicalism that are worth noting (along with the importance placed on Scripture, the atoning work of Christ and the need for individual response) include the fact that it is a renewal movement within historic Christian orthodoxy. [12] So, while valuing the traditional values of historic Christianity, evangelicals are also "a people who believe in reaching out and in church growth," [13] taking very seriously the Great Commission. This has made evangelicals both a very traditional and also a culturally accommodating people.[14] As shall be seen, in the current culture of the Global North, evangelicalism finds itself in need of accommodating to a changing culture once again. With the emphasis on evangelism and church growth in relation to individual conversion, the state of affairs today in regard to evangelicalism ought to provide a wake-up call of sorts.

At one point in most Western Nations, Christianity "held court as the de facto religion of the empire, and the church stood at or near the center of political power;"[15] this reality has been on a rapid decline in the current generation, with Christianity "gradually losing its status as the lingua franca in Western culture" and becoming increasingly a "local language used only by those who are professing Christians, not understood by others."[16] Volf notes that in today's society, the church "has become a

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[12] Haykin and Stewart, eds., *The Advent of Evangelicalism*, 14-15.

[13] Richard Kyle, *Evangelicalism: An Americanized Christianity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 2.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Lee Beach, *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 32.

[16] Ibid., 32-33.

specialized institution for religious questions," and religion in today's society "survives as a functional subsystem of a functionally differentiated society."[17] Stefan Paas suggests that within the Global North, "church" or "religion" is no longer connected as it once was with other domains such as politics, science or economics. Church is now a separate sector, catering solely to religious needs. In this new scenario, people feel no pressure or obligation to attend church, and therefore attend only if they want to. Going to church is also no longer seen as "the right thing to do" coming out of a place of common values or shared beliefs. Therefore, people go to church only if they have a need in which it is perceived that only the church can meet.[18] This poses the question to evangelicals of the need to evangelize or become more missional – strengthening their focus once again on the sharing of the gospel in what is now a majority non-Christian society. In recent years it used to be stated that Canadian culture was becoming secular, but in fact (as the statistics below will show) the Global North (including Canada) is more religious (or spiritual) than it ever was before.

The *Center for the Study of Global Christianity* note in a 2013 study that from 1970 to 2020 (projected), there are several apparent trends in regard to religious affiliation. One fascinating trend the study notes is the growth of religious affiliation (82 percent of the world's population identified as religious in 1970; in 2010 this number grew to 88 percent and is projected to be 90 percent by 2020). North America is becoming more religiously diverse; Christianity within North America, however, is

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[17] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 14.

[18] Stefan Paas, "Mission Among Individual Consumers," in *The Gospel After Christendom: New Voices, New Culture, New Expressions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 152.

declining at a dramatic rate.[19] In Canada, those who identify as Christian fell from almost 95 percent of the population in 1970 to under 70 percent in 2010, with a projected drop to around 65 percent by 2020. This decrease has been felt almost exclusively among Protestants, with the numbers identifying as Roman Catholic holding steady.[20] Within Protestantism, evangelicals more specifically – as shall be seen – are not holding their own.

In their study entitled *Hemorrhaging Faith*, researchers looked specifically at millennials (ages 18-34) in Canada within evangelicalism and noted a sobering reality: 50 percent "raised Christian" within an evangelical church no longer attend church regularly, with many not attending at all and having also dropped their Christian affiliation.[21] Among centennials[22] in Canada, almost 50 percent report that they never attend religious services, with just over 40 percent claiming to be either Protestant or Catholic – down from almost 85 percent in 1984. Over 30 percent, in fact, report themselves as "religious nones" in terms of affiliation, and an additional 16 percent reported as being affiliated with a non-Christian faith. These changes that are rapidly taking place in regards to religious affiliation, and especially among the younger generations, indicate the extent to which the religious landscape in Canada is changing and will continue to change.[23] On a

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[19] Center for the Study of Global Christianity, *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020: Society, Religion, and Mission* (Boston, MA: Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 2013), 6-7.

[20] Ibid., 62.

[21] James Penner, Rachel Harder, Erika Anderson, Bruno Désorcy, and Rick Hiemstra, *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church* (Richmond Hill, ON: The EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable, 2011), 5.

[22] Those under 18 generally, but in the context of this paper between the ages of 13-18.

[23] Beach, *The Church in Exile*, 35.

larger and more inclusive scale, the Canadian population, "in large numbers, are expressing spiritual needs and interests, with many seeing themselves as spiritual."[24] A reality check for Evangelicals, however, is that less than 5% of Canadians claim to be Evangelical Christians.[25] A renewal is needed within this renewal movement.

Beyond the statistics, there are other reasons why the number of attendees of evangelical churches are on the decline. Within much of evangelicalism, salvation takes place between individual souls and God (as noted above), with the church emerging "through the addition of those who, as isolated individuals, have become Christians and now live as Christians."[26] Personal faith in Christ, as emphasized in the Reformation, ceased to be absorbed into the church – emphasis placed instead on individual repentance and faith in the gospel. Sacraments such as baptism and the Lord's supper ceased to be a means of grace and rather became an act of commitment. "Protestants," notes Horton, "have tended to place the emphasis on personal choice and a voluntary society over against the visible church."[27] Horton goes on to note:

> It is possible today for a professing believer to go from the nursery to children's church to the youth group to campus ministries to groups for singles, then young marrieds, all the way to 'empty nesters' and 'golden oldies,' without ever having actually joined a church, or at least without having been immersed in the cross-generational and cross-cultural communion of saints that is generated through the public ministry of the Word, sacrament, and discipline. Is it then any wonder that so many evangelical young people abandon the church by their sophomore year in college, especially when they have routinely heard the distinction between 'becoming a Christian' and 'joining a church'?[28]

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[24] Reginald Bibby, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing Company, 2002), 190.

[25] C2C Network Canada, *Canadian Statistics* (Vancouver, BC: C2C Network, Spring 2012), 4.

[26] Miroslav Volf, *After our Likeness*, 162.

[27] Horton, "The Church After Evangelicalism," 141.

[28] Ibid., 134.

In this way of thinking (contractual thinking as opposed to covenantal), the church becomes more of a service agency as opposed to a religious meeting place – an entity that exists to meet people's needs. In this light, as suggested by George Barna, "the institutional church is no longer relevant and should be replaced by informal gatherings for fellowship."[29] Many believers, as noted above, have decided to move beyond the institutional church and "be" the church instead. Horton expresses his concern with this paradigm shift as follows: "everything begins with the individual's personal decision, strengthened by more personal disciplines, and ends with the abandonment of the visible church. God's ordained means of grace (found in the community of the church) are replaced with whatever is calculated to facilitate our own means of commitment."[30] The church as a religious meeting place for ongoing transformation/conversion has faded into the background. There is a need for evangelicals to return to one of their main tenants – that of conversion; yet, the realization that this is a time in which attending church is no longer obligatory by societal expectations, evangelicals perhaps need to recognize the role of church life in this act of conversion.

Part of what has allowed for this paradigm shift is that the Free Church tradition has been shaped by an ecclesiological understanding of Matthew 18:20 ("where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them"). Interestingly, Volf points out that while Free Church theologians were the first to accord Matthew 18:20 "a key systematic role in ecclesiology, this particular passage actually acquired preeminent

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[29] Ibid., 146-147.

[30] Ibid.

importance quite early in the church."[31] The question becomes how to pair this understanding with an added understanding of the importance of the visible (institutional) church to the act of conversion. The dominance of personal choice added to an ecclesiological understanding of Matthew 18:20 is as much a source of evangelicalism's previous success in the Global North when there was a societal obligation or expectation to "go" to church as it is of the movement's inability to represent an alternative society in present day North America.[32]

The new trend in North America is to be unaffiliated, and it is a trend among the religious and non-religious alike. [33] This seems to be a paradox of growing proportions as the number of Christians who are not affiliated with any particular church tradition is on the rise.[34] Yes, a growing number of Christians are now unaffiliated with any church tradition, let alone attend an institutional church. Kevin Brewin warns: "If Christianity is to remain 'vital,' then it is, in the truest sense, 'vital that we understand change: for an organism to show signs of life, it must show it can respond to its environment, and for the church to retain a vibrancy about its faith, it must 'adapt and survive.'"[35] At this point in history, in both the theology and practice of the church among countless Christians, there is a revolution taking place.[36] For some of these revolutionaries, the congregational

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[31] Volf, *After our Likeness*, 135.

[32] Horton, "The Church After Evangelicalism," 149.

[33] Center for the Study of Global Christianity, *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020*, 7.

[34] Ibid., 62.

[35] Kevin Brewin, *Signs of Emergence: A Vision for the Church that is Organic, Networked, Decentralized, Bottom-up, Communal, Flexible, Always Evolving* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 19.

[36] Viola, *Reimagining Church*, 15.

experience is still central to their faith journey; for others the local church plays a minor role – and for millions of others, the local church is nowhere to be found in their experience. This does not mean, however, that they are not involved in some form of church; it simply means that the congregational style of church is being joined – or in many cases, replaced – by various alternatives.[37] The major reason for this shift and a desire for alternatives from the congregational style of doing church, Barna suggests, is "people's insistence on choices and their desire to have customized experiences."[38] There is a preference for practical faith experiences over and above merely conceptual faith, along with a desire for both a depth and breadth of spirituality above and beyond merely predictable religious experiences and the inflexible scheduling of religious events.[39] Horton goes on to note that "Volf also points out that the privatization of faith that warps ecclesiology also makes Free Church ecclesiologies more effective in contemporary cultures."[40] Perhaps a return to the bipolarity of experience and doctrine within evangelicalism is needed – with a greater emphasis on the experience (having just come out of enlightened modernity's emphasis on truth/correct doctrine) while maintaining orthodoxy. The emerging Canadian culture, it can safely be assumed, will relate to an orthopraxy derived from an orthopathy while based on orthodoxy.

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[37] George Barna, *Revolution: Worn out on Church? Finding Vibrant Faith Beyond the Walls of the Sanctuary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005), 61-62.

[38] Ibid., 62-63.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Horton, "The Church After Evangelicalism," 149.

The culture of the millennials is one which is postmodern, autonomous, individualistic, and consumeristic.[41] In this setting, the autonomy of the self argues for more than just the individual's choice of religion; namely, the "recognition that faith is *only* a matter of personal choice."[42] Volf profoundly suggests that "the worm of modernity is slowly eating away at the root of this will to ecclesial community; faith lived ecclesially is being replaced with faith lived individualistically, a diffuse faith that includes within itself the elements of multiple forms of religiosity and is continually changing."[43] The theological debate then, suggests Volf, around the church being a community, is therefore also a missiological dispute "concerning the correct way in which the communal form of Christian faith today is to be lived authentically and transmitted effectively."[44] As noted above, evangelicals may need to revisit their method of gospel proclamation in this new age.

Is there a way the church can engage these 'revolutionaries' who for the most part are sincerely looking for an authentic and full relationship with the Lord? Rather than questioning the hearts of these revolutionaries, is there a way to offer them what they are seeking in the community of the church? They are tired of programs that fail to facilitate transformation and practices that fall short of drawing them into the very presence of God.[45] In *Hemorrhaging Faith*, two of the most impactful or sought after elements of

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[41] Penner, et al, *Hemorrhaging Faith*, 13-14.

[42] Horton, "The Church After Evangelicalism," 141-142.

[43] Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 11.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, xxv-xxvi.

millennials are stated to be experience and community. Again, these concepts are not foreign to evangelicals. "Members of today's emerging generation want to experience God in a very tangible and personally meaningful way. Many want God to answer their prayers in their way and according to their timing. They want to hear him, be touched by him and see him – or at least evidence of him."[46] Unfortunately, for a growing number the evangelical church is not the place to find community in which this experience of God is found. Interestingly, the problem is not with God – but with the church as an institution. This next generation, along with the revolutionaries from each generation, are looking to be a part of a dynamic movement rather than a stagnant institution.[47] Evangelicalism, interestingly, began as just such a movement within the church.

Returning to Olson's thoughts on evangelicalism, he notes that it is "a spiritual and theological renewal movement of individuals bound together by the Spirit of God in community; it has arisen and thrived because of ordinary Spirit-filled individuals who have heard a word from God and have called the church to renewal and reform."[48] It is time again, in this present culture and context of North America, for just such a call. Robert Webber notes that historically, the term evangelical refers to movements "that have attempted to restore a vital historic Christianity to the church at those moments when the church has become dead in spirit or has departed from the faith of the fathers."[49] In speaking of the cultural changes at hand, Bhakiaraj encourages that this calls for an "underlining of the true nature of the Evangelical Movement: as a gospel

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[46] Penner, et al, *Hemorrhaging Faith*, 47.

[47] Ibid., 52.

[48] Olson, "Free Church Ecclesiology and Evangelical Spirituality," 167-168.

[49] Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 14.

centered people in multiple and complex contexts. While our contexts will differ and our responses vary we must never lose sight of the centrality of the gospel itself."[50] Webber wisely states that "evangelicalism has an unchanging message for a changing culture."[51] These are exciting times for the evangelical church, if evangelicalism will recall and revitalize its' core ethos: *the orthodox experience of Christ in contemporary culture*.

Marva Dawn recognizes that at this juncture in history, the evangelical church "has a wonderful opportunity to respond to deep longings in the culture that surrounds it" – if it strengthens itself to be genuine community.[52] Dwight Friesen states: "The post-Christendom shift can, if we are wise, usher the church into a season of refocusing our energies on the primary mission that Jesus gave his followers: to form disciples of Christ."[53] With thoughts like this in mind, what is it that the declining evangelical church ought to do? Beyond the debate of institutional versus non-institutional church, perhaps the call for the evangelical church – whatever its form – is to return to transformational conversion found in authentic community and based on historical Christianity.

Gordon Smith states that the goal of conversion is a transformed humanity – which is essentially knowing the love of God displayed in Christ and to love God in response, followed by an experience of the love of others. In this sense, transformation

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[50] Paul Joshua Bhakiaraj, "The Future of the Evangelical Movement," in *Evangelicals Around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21st Century*, eds. Brian C. Stiller, Todd M. Johnson, Karen Stiller and Mark Hutchinson (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 224.

[51] Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 13.

[52] Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology for Worship for this Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 134.

[53] Dwight J. Friesen, "Formation in the Post-Christendom Era: Exilic Practices and Missional Identity," in *The Gospel After Christendom: New Voices, New Culture, New Expressions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 195.

has a corporate expression, meaning that one matures in their capacity to live in community – the church.[54] An important clarification in this, as pointed out by Smith, is the recognition that conversion is not necessarily simple, punctiliar and definitive but may very well be drawn out over many years.[55] This conversion takes place in the

> experience of authentic community, a familial love and devotion of its members to one another, (and) the centrality of Jesus Christ, the native instinct to gather together without static ritual, the innate desire to form deep-seated relationships that are centered on Christ, the internal drive for open participatory gatherings, and the loving impulse to display Jesus to a fallen world. While the seed of the gospel will naturally produce these particular features, *how* they are expressed may look slightly different from culture to culture."[56]

May the evangelical movement have the courage to return to its roots as a renewal movement within the Church, calling God's people (and those yet to be God's people) to a converting faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ lived out in authentic community. The Canadian people are searching, they are religious and open to the spiritual, they are looking for an experience rooted in authentic community, and are looking to get involved. The evangelical movement has a wonderful opportunity indeed at this juncture in the Global North.

Evangelical Foundations: Moving Forward, Looking Back

Within the evangelical faith there has been an emphasis on the Word of God and a proper understanding of God's Word, followed by application. While this is recognized as a strength, what has been lacking is a keen appreciation and apprehension of the very

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[54] Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2001), 26.

[55] Ibid., 18.

[56] Viola, *Reimaging Church*, 45-46.

presence of God, who revealed Himself to humanity in the very Word of God, Jesus Christ. The balance between the transcendence of God and the immanence of God, notes Michael Horton, "are two opposite poles in which we swing in pendulum like fashion when we are not anchored to God's self-revelation."[57] Yes, the Word of God (Jesus Christ as revealed in Holy Scripture) is the means by which one is led into the presence of God, but is this the desired outcome of the evangelical faith – to find oneself in the immanent presence of the transcendent God? Continuing with this line of thought on the centrality of the Word of God, the question being asked of the evangelicals is this: does the Word of God teach us about God or invite us to God? Perhaps the answer is both and if it is, then the question becomes: how well has the evangelical church responded to the invitation?

Alister McGrath speaks of Christian spiritualty in relation to the outworking of a person's faith. Spirituality is what a person "*does* with what they believe. It is not just about ideas, although the basic ideas of the Christian faith are important to Christian spirituality. . .. It is about the full apprehension of the reality of God."[58] McGrath goes on to note that it is an achieving and sustaining of a relationship with God. Yet what does this relationship entail – what does it look like? It is to be a knowing of God, an experiencing of God to the full, "attaining Christian authenticity in life and thought"[59] which displays itself in obedient action and response – Christian living. Within the evangelical church, however, what often seems to be the case is a call to authenticity in

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[57] Michael Horton, *In the Face of God* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1996), 77.

[58] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 2.

[59] McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 4.

life and thought as a Christian, based upon an understanding of biblical truths, devoid of any real experience of the presence of God.

An answer to this dilemma may be found in the making of an evangelical mystic. A. W. Tozer defines such a person as one "who has been brought by the gospel into intimate fellowship with the Godhead." In this the centrality of Christ and the Holy Scripture are not relegated to the sidelines, but have a purpose beyond mere rationality. Tozer goes to describe the evangelical mystic as follows:

> His theology is no less and no more than is taught in the Christian Scriptures. He walks the high road of truth where walked of old prophets and apostles, and where down the centuries walked martyrs, reformers, Puritans, evangelists and missionaries of the cross. He differs from the ordinary orthodox Christian only because he experiences his faith down in the depths of his sentient being while the other does not. He lives in a world of spiritual reality. He is quietly, deeply, and sometimes almost ecstatically aware of the Presence of God in his own nature and in the world around him. His religious experience is something elemental, as old as time and the creation. It is immediate acquaintance with God by union with the Eternal Son. It is to know that which passes knowledge.[60]

Donald Bloesch, a devout evangelical theologian, once stated: "Theology must not be rejected in favor of either practical piety or devout mysticism." This statement rings with truth, yet the question moving forward, rephrased, is whether or not theology (one's understanding of God gleaned from the Word of God) ought to *lead* the believer to both practical piety and devout mysticism.

Within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the heartbeat of evangelicalism was that of a quest for True Religion – the practice of genuine Christianity. With this emphasis, being both a "new movement of personal Christian experience and an ongoing expression of ancient Christian faith," evangelicals became an important force in Western

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[60] A. W. Tozer, *The Christian Book of Mystical Verse* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publication Inc., 1963), v-vi.

societies.[61] At present time, in the twenty-first century, one finds that evangelical force has waned, as seen within the Canadian context. Reginald Bibby, as noted above, stated: "Canadians, in large numbers, are expressing spiritual needs and interests, with many seeing themselves as spiritual."[62] Yet be reminded, less than 5% of Canadians claim to be evangelical Christians.[63] What is the challenge for the evangelical church in this – not only for the sake of reaching those who are yet outside of the Christian community, but for discipling those who are Christians?

In his book, *Restless Churches*, Bibby hits on what is a cornerstone in this endeavor: what he calls "the need to rediscover God."[64] Dallas Willard asked the question this way: "How do we (the church) move back into the powerful form of life which won the worlds of the past and can alone meet the crying needs of our world today?" Willard answers by suggesting that the local church "must resume the practice of making the spiritual formation of their members into Christlikeness their primary goal."[65] While there has been some unease with the whole spiritual formation movement, to neglect the implications of this movement is a disservice to the evangelical faith. For one, the spiritual formation movement has helped to restore what Richard Langer refers to as a "thicker" notion of salvation. Langer notes that much evangelical teaching/preaching

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[61] Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 262-267.

[62] Reginald Bibby, *The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing Company, 2002), 190.

[63] C2C Network Canada, *Canadian Statistics*, 4.

[64] Reginald Bibby, *Restless Churches: How Canada's Churches Can Contribute to the Emerging Religious Renaissance* (Toronto, ON: Novalis/Saint Paul University, 2004), 53.

[65] James Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 10.

called for professions of belief in Jesus – those who believed becoming saved (those who rejected remained unsaved). This led to a thin view of salvation, as it pictured one's spirituality as having only two possible positions: "on or off, life or death, heaven or hell, saved or unsaved."[66] There was no space in this simplicity for spiritual growth or formation – for getting to know God on a deeper level.

Writing in 1988, Richard Lovelace noted that as he began to study "movements of spiritual awakening in Protestantism, I had a scholarly awakening. I woke up to the fact that spirituality was a drastically neglected subject among scholars. Christian experience (of the presence of God) was treated as an optional dimension of Christian life."[67] The Canadian evangelical church has been successful in leading people to a confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour ("thin" salvation) and then providing them with a social network (others who "believe" and so experience the same "thin" salvation) within which to live out that confession. While both of these are instrumental, is there not more that can be done to bring believers into the area of the sacred – the very presence of Christ in their daily lives? There is a spiritual hunger among the Canadian people, including among some Evangelicals, as "they long not only for the social, but also for the sacred," readily acknowledging "that they frequently feel 'something' is missing from their lives."[68] Alister McGrath reflects that the "growing interest in spirituality within evangelicalism is highly significant, a sure and telling sign that all is not well with the

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[66] Richard Langer, "Points of Unease with the Spiritual Formation Movement," in *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* (Fall 2012): 182-183.

[67] Richard F. Lovelace, "Evangelical Spirituality," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 214.

[68] Reginald Bibby, *The Boomer Factor: What Canada's Most Famous Generation is Leaving Behind* (Toronto, ON: Bastian Books, 2006), 178.

rather cerebral approaches to Christianity that have dominated the evangelical community."[69] There is need for a renewed spirituality within evangelicalism – an experience of God, a "thicker" understanding of salvation.

Current statistics indicate that within the present context the evangelical church is no longer taking the West by force. In recent Statistics Canada polls, the trend shows a growing decline among Canadians both in religious affiliation and church attendance. For example, in 1971 only "1% of the adult population indicated that they had no religious affiliation;" in 2005 that number was up to 22%. Recalling the figure above, out of the 78% who then claim a religious affiliation, less than 5% fall in the evangelical Christian category. Canadians are open to spirituality and to the concept of God, but evidence would suggest that a growing number of Canadians are not finding those needs met in evangelical Christianity. In fact, in recent years Wicca has been the fastest growing religion in Canada.[70]

The enduring priorities of the evangelical movement throughout the West, as already alluded to above, have been crucicentrism, conversionism, biblicism and activism.[71] In his book, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, John Wolffe defines the priorities of evangelicalism as follows: "*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for

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[69] Alister McGrath, "Loving God with Heart and Mind," in *For all the Saints: Evangelical Theology and Christian Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 13.

[70] C2C Network Canada, 4.

[71] David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 23.

the Bible; *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross."[72] Can there be an experiential piece added to this mix without compromising these priorities? In his book, *The Younger Evangelicals*, Robert Webber believes there is a new generation of leaders who may just bring such a change. Interestingly, Webber notes that this next generation of evangelicals, among other things, is *attracted to absolutes*. Arriving at these absolutes, however, takes a different course then the generation before them; it is not through evidence or logic (rationalism) by which the younger evangelicals desire to arrive at these absolutes, but rather through experience. "They want truth," writes Webber, "that is a matter of the 'heart as well as the mind.' . . . The importance of truth is not so much that it is understood but that it is loved and lived."[73] Flowing out of this, the younger evangelicals also desire a Christianity which is authentic in unifying both thought and action. It is a desire to be in touch with God and out of that to have the reality of God unleashed in community.[74] This, Langer would state, is "thick" salvation.

Writing in 1978, Donald Bloesch expressed concern over what he saw as neo-pietism within modern evangelicalism, "characterized by an emphasis on religious experience over doctrine. . .. Practical piety and mystical awareness figure more highly than biblical or dogmatic theology."[75] Bloesch goes on to argue that while the experience of salvation ought not to be discounted, it yet needs to be tested by the objective criterion

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[72] John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 19-20.

[73] Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 52.

[74] Ibid., 53.

[75] Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* Vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1978), 1-2.

of the Scriptures. For Bloesch, faith was so much more than a spiritual experience, it was "an acknowledgement of the claims of Jesus Christ and an obedience to his commands. It consists in personal devotion to a living Saviour."[76] Here one finds the beauty of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, but not much by the way of the orthopathy desired by the younger evangelicals referred to by Webber. Again, this is the piece that has been laid down, forgotten – relegated to the sidelines of evangelical faith.

Bloesch is correct when he says that the evangelical faith "is not directed simply to the mystical presence of Christ or to the unconditional, but to Jesus Christ crucified and risen according to the Scriptures," yet when he goes on to argue that "a spirituality that is not theologically and biblically based may be worse than none"[77] he displays what has been lost in evangelicalism. Langer argues that this pursuit of a mere cognitive spirituality among evangelicals tips the scales too far. Christian spirituality ought to not only inculcate knowledge of God but also experience of the love of God – which is actually in line with Biblical teaching![78] Bloesch, however, goes on to note:

> H. Richard Niebuhr has made the astute observation that evangelical Protestantism is characterized by it stress on the sovereignty of God instead of the vision of God (as in Roman Catholicism). The accent is therefore placed on spiritual and ethical obedience, the attempt to bring our wills into conformity with his will. In this perspective, a passion to change the world takes precedence over the desire to transcend the world.[79]

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Langer, "Points of Unease with the Spiritual Formation Movement," 184.

[79] Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* Vol. 1, 32.

Could it not be possible that in the transcending one finds the experience of the presence of God to be the very fuel for passion to change the world – the very fuel to "bring our wills into conformity with his will"? The attempt becomes, then, one to know God.

Returning to the core elements of evangelicalism (crucicentrism, conversionism, biblicism and activism), it can be argued that an increased awareness and experience (immanence) of the transcendence of God may actually aid in this evangelical mission. Gordon T. Smith notes that the "the goal of our conversion is a transformed humanity. We seek to be what we were created to be – fully human, transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. . .. When we identify with Christ and live in gracious union with him, we become all we were created to be," finding ourselves in the pursuit of "dynamic communion with God our Maker."[80] In this communion with God, found in and through Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit, "transformed humanity finds joy, strength and life through a profound fellowship."[81] Smith then picks up on the activism piece, stating:

> Second, the transformation we seek has a social dimension. To be fully human, transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, is to experience the love of others, to have the mature capacity to live in mutual love and submission with others. Transformation has a corporate expression, which means that we mature in our capacity to live in community. A person who is transformed into the image of Christ necessarily knows how to be loved by others and to love others.[82]

These thoughts put forth by Smith fit well not only in the evangelical tradition from which he writes, but also in the mystical tradition and understanding of the Christian faith. The difference between the two is based on the evangelical stance,

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[80] Smith, *Beginning Well*, 26.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

founded on the work of the Reformers in opposition to the mysticism that was flowering in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, that there is only one source of revelation, Holy Scripture.[83] On the side of mysticism, however, it can be argued that mystical practice is a response to the revelation of Scripture.

Mysticism hinges, suggests Herrera, on a single point: if God exists (and according to Christian mystics He does), then He is the ultimate goal of human life.[84] Harkness, in quoting William Inge, writes: "Mysticism means communion with God."[85] For the mystic, this is the goal – to have a personal encounter with his or her God. The mystical experience centers round an apprehension or awareness of God which goes beyond the rationality of the mind and self-willed activity (as we have seen to be so prevalent in evangelicalism); prior to the experience, however, preparation which is both devoted and disciplined is needed (including such things as prayer and ascetic practices). Following the mystical experience there ought to be fruit in accordance with the experience; the individual is transformed in the sense of having a greater capacity for such things as the spiritual virtues.[86] This is for the purpose of bringing glory to God, which John Calvin (the great Reformer) saw as humanity's deepest need – emphasizing *Soli Deo Gloria*.[87]

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[83] Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 57-58.

[84] R. A. Herrera, *Silent Music: The Life, Work, and Thought of St. John of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 2.

[85] Georgia Harkness, *Mysticism: Its Meaning and Message* (London, UK: Abingdon Press, 1973), 20.

[86] James Harpur, *Love Burning in the Soul: The Story of the Christian Mystics, from Saint John to Thomas Merton* (Boston, MA: New Seeds, 2005), 2-3.

[87] Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 38-40.

Harkness puts forth several presuppositions held by mystics, including: the material world is not all that there is, meaning that there is knowledge beyond what the five senses can grasp; there is a spiritual realm which is related to but not identical with the material realm; the existence of an Absolute beyond the visible world and upon which the visible world depends; the human soul is capable of coming into union/communion with this Absolute; and the role of goodness and purity in preparing for this union/communion with the Absolute and as a result of this meeting.[88] In regard to the Christian mystic, Herrera states that grace must be mentioned as it is a principle of the Christian life. Grace lies within the human soul, explains Herrera, and is "nurtured by an ascetic life of prayer and self-discipline." Grace is that which allows the soul to participate in the Divine life, leading the soul to a vision of God – following which "the soul can reach the very highest levels of sanctity." In the mystical life, grace is more experiential and develops in such a way that surpasses the natural order, elevating "the soul to a degree of infused knowledge and love, which at its apex is identified as mystical contemplation."[89]

Richard Lovelace, providing a cautionary word in regard to Christian mysticism, notes that it views spiritual growth as the result of hard work (an image often employed is that of climbing a ladder), involving what is referred to as the Triple way: "the purging of sin from one's life, then the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and then Union with God."[90] One of the concerns which arises with such an understanding of Christian mysticism is

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[88] Harkness, *Mysticism*, 56-58.

[89] Ibid., 7-8.

[90] Richard Lovelace, "Evangelical Spirituality," 216.

that it appears to be overwhelmingly Theocentric rather than Christocentric. Within evangelical spirituality, Lovelace notes, union with God is "part of the birthright acquired by faith in Christ. And this is the genius of Reformation spirituality. It assumes that the simplest believer leaps to the top of the spiritual ladder simply by realistic faith in Jesus Christ. . .. They may slip down a few rungs during the course of a day, but the way up again is not by climbing. It is by the vault of faith."[91]

Reformers such as Martin Luther essentially turned the Triple Way on its head. Rather than achieving union with Christ through discipline, it is received through faith. This is followed by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit which reveals to the believer their sins. The final step is the purgation of sin, a sanctifying process in which the Christian is "led by the Spirit to recognize, confess and put to death the particular patterns of sin that are present in our characteristic fallen nature."[92] As noted above, this encapsulates an evangelical understanding – and what evangelicals would refer to as a Biblical understanding – of spiritual growth. Philips and Bloesch sum up evangelical spirituality as follows: "True biblical or evangelical spirituality is an obedient response to the holiness won for us by God's personal incursion into history. Without these words and acts, spirituality reverts to subjectivism and mysticism."[93]

Returning our thoughts to mystical spirituality, the primary concern is this: how can one truly know God immanently? One of the simplest ways perhaps to differentiate between mystical and evangelical spirituality is that the former seeks actual union with

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[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., 216-217.

[93] Philips and Bloesch, "Counterfeit Spirituality," 71-72.

God in this life (experience), while the latter involves learning information about God (doctrine) in which one puts their faith. Christian mystics recognize that knowledge of doctrine and having faith is necessary but not sufficient, "for the goal of the Christian life is not knowledge *about* God but knowledge *of* God and union *with* God."[94] For the Christian mystic, "God is the subject, not the object; the knower, not the known; the one who initiates the relationship. God is the one who reveals Himself to believers and the one who unites believers to Himself in perfect bliss and harmony."[95] The work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit is not denied by the mystic, but neither is the call to deny one's self in order to find God more fully and completely. Gordon T. Smith, as an evangelical Christian, notes the importance of the Trinity in this process, emphasising even more so the Christocentric importance in conversion/transformation, and goes on to state: "There is no doubting, then, that the telos of the Christian life is a transformation into the image of Christ, which comes through an actual dynamic and perhaps even mystical union with Christ."[96] Smith goes on to say that "this union with Christ also means and must mean an alignment with the purposes of Christ in the world. The Christian learns to live life toward the glory and reign of Christ, rather than toward oneself. A mature Christian is one with a deep desire and capacity for service that is offered to Christ for the sake of others."[97]

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[94] Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 165-166.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Gordon T. Smith, *Transforming Conversion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 94-96.

[97] Ibid., 94-96.

Donald Bloesch would present this somewhat differently, stating that the believer does "not press forward into a deeper union with Christ" but rather seeks to demonstrate a union already actualized as they live out their faith in Christian service.[98] The words of A. W. Tozer, recorded in his classic work *The Pursuit of God*, have implications here in bridging the gap: "To have found God and still pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart."[99] John of the Cross, one of the greatest mystics ever produced in Christianity,[100] saw these questions as an issue in his day. In the prologue of one of his great works – *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* – St. John notes that there are so many souls who have not advanced in their faith, due either to not knowing how, or an unwillingness to cooperate with the grace of God. John writes in order to provide some help to such souls – teaching them how to cooperate with the grace of God in order that they may become all that God intends for them to be.[101]

The goal of the spiritual journey for John of the Cross is union with God; through this union with God, John believed human beings had great potential to love as God Himself loves. The deep sin within humanity is what keeps humanity from being able to love like God (which is to bring glory to God), and in his writings John tries to show how humanity can cooperate with the grace of God in removing the sin which blocks

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[98] Bloesch, *Spirituality Old and New* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 143.

[99] A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., n/d), 15.

[100] Alain Cugno, *St. John of the Cross: The Life and Thought of a Christian Mystic*, trans. Barbara Wall (London, UK: Burns & Oates, 1979), 1.

[101] St. John of the Cross, "The Ascent of Mount Carmel," in *John of the Cross: Selected Writings*, ed. by Kieran Kavanaugh (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), 57-58.

humanity from union with God and hence from being able to love like Him.[102] One aspect of this sin is the inappropriate attachment to or desire for "things" outside of or above God; thus the need for detachment as already discussed above. Petra van Eck and Frank England describe the positive outcome of such detachment as follows: "Once that which is ultimately desired is forsaken and given up as lost, with even the expectation of return being quelled, only then may we begin to locate people, objects, aspirations and desires within their own frameworks, rather than as interpolated victims of our own pathologically ridden discourse."[103]

John emphasizes that love needs to be practiced in both action (active life) and contemplation, but warns against those who give little time to contemplation and think instead that the active life accomplishes more for God (as with many evangelicals, as noted above). The following is John's thought in *The Spiritual Canticle*:

> It should be noted that until the soul reaches this state of union of love, she should practice love in both the active and contemplative way. Yet once she arrives, she should not become involved in other works and exterior exercises that might be of the slightest hindrance to the attentiveness of love toward God. For a little of this pure love is more precious to God and the soul and more beneficial to the Church, even though it seems one is doing nothing, than all these others works put together.[104]

The ability to live a virtuous Christian life flows not out of a desire to live a virtuous Christian life (the attempt referred to above), but rather it flows out of a desire for God;

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[102] Helen Marshall, "St John of the Cross," in *Mysticisms East and West: Studies in Mystical Experience* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2003), 213.

[103] Petra van Eck and Frank England, "The Way of Dispossession: Modern Theology Engages with a Saint," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 73 (December 1990): 65.

[104] St. John of the Cross, "The Spiritual Canticle," in *John of the Cross: Selected Writings* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), 270.

as one rests in Him, and desires Him, their life will be one of virtuous benefit to the Church and to the world.

Christopher Nugent, in an article on "Satori in St. John of the Cross," suggests that while not all Christians are a John of the Cross, they may all benefit from his illumination; Nugent sees the benefit of clarification in John of the Cross in pointing out that Christianity is not merely a religion of faith but also one of experience.[105] It is the experience of purgative suffering that brings one's will in union with God's and hence opens up the possibility for the virtuous life. In some concluding reflections upon St. John of the Cross, Helen Marshall states that if one is looking for a spirituality which costs little and is soothing to the self, then they must look elsewhere than John of the Cross - for John of the Cross "challenges a comfortable spirituality which leaves untouched the depth of our self-centredness and self-deception. His mystical thought requires a person to undergo an utter and costly transformation by God's love."[106]

If one is looking for a spirituality that will not only lead them into the next life, but also lead them into a virtuous Christian life here and now, St. John of the Cross – along with many other Christian mystics – has something to offer. The offer is a call to revolution within the human soul, with a revolutionary effect upon the world. With an open ear to the younger evangelicals and a willingness to learn through such teachings of Christian mystics, the evangelical church could perhaps once again find themselves to be a force to be reckoned with in this post-modern age. Perhaps what is needed most of all at

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[105] Christopher Nugent, "Satori in St. John of the Cross," *Eastern Buddhist* 29 (Spring 1996): 64-65.

[106] Marshall, "St John of the Cross," 226.

this cusp to bring about change is for shepherds after God's own heart to once again arise within the evangelical church.

Evangelicalism has been known for being both orthodox and experiential, with an emphasis on practice. The call arises again for the shepherds of this renewal movement to call the church into authentic conversion in community. This is the reality which the younger evangelicals desire and a faith which will be appealing to a culture open to a living (experienced) spirituality. The centrality of the Shema, Shabbat and Shalom must not be overlooked as the foundational correctives in bringing about this change.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION

This chapter will tie together the implications and potential impact of a renewed clergy within the evangelical tradition as a possible answer, at least in part, to the plight of evangelicalism in Canada. There are many possible answers to advance evangelicalism into a force to be reckoned with in contemporary culture, with many being tried in recent years: seeker sensitive church, the emerging church movement, house churches, and the shift to missional focus to name just a few. The conclusion herein will limit itself to pastoral impact as an answer in advancing evangelicalism.

Friedrich von Hügel, in *The Mystical Element of Religion*, sees a living religion as having a tension-in-unity between the following three elements: the Institutional, the Intellectual, and the Mystical.[1] Modern day Evangelicalism has an institutional aspect in organized religion (church), and intellectualism insofar as it is doctrinal; the struggle perhaps lies within the mystical element – an important piece if contemporary Evangelicalism is not going to be seen as dead in this day and age. Douglas Coupland, a Canadian author, wrote: "Sometimes I think the people I feel the saddest for are people who are unable to connect with the profound. . . And then sometimes I think the people to feel saddest for are people who once knew what profoundness was, but who lost or became numb to the sense of wonder – people who closed the doors that lead us into the secret world."[2] There has been a loss of wonder – a closing of doors – within

[1] Anne Freemantle and W. H. Auden, *The Protestant Mystics* (New York, NY: Mentor Books, 1964), 13.

[2] Douglas Coupland, *Life After God* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1994), 50-51.

Evangelicalism in the Global North; the mystery of the Christian faith has been pushed beneath and even flattened by intellectualism and institutionalism.

Clark Pinnock shares his own experience as an evangelical in this matrix, noting he has wrestled with spirituality (the mystical aspect of his Christian faith), depending on the grace of God as something in the past which provided salvation and as something in the future promising glorification, but not as a transformative experience in the present. Pinnock states that as a typical evangelical, he loaded his "mind with intellectual analysis" but had become "deficient at the affective, everyday level of walking with God." [3] He writes: "Like many others I have substituted the knowledge of the Bible for the skills of interacting with God himself. I did not trust personal experience but have relegated matters of the heart to an inferior place. I have valued doctrinal formulation but have been less sure-footed when it comes to issues of the soul."[4] The need for the contemporary evangelical is to be touched by God, to be drawn up higher an deeper into God's trinitarian love – his very embrace; "to go beyond mere thinking and to become an intimate with Christ himself."[5]

Peter Adams argues, in *Hearing God's Words*, that there ought not to be a lack of confidence in the possibility or even reality of an evangelical spirituality (mystical experience). For it is the evangelicals above most other groups who assert the power and authority of the Bible as the Word of God. Adams suggests that the doctrine of *sola scriptura* ought to lead to a strong spirituality as opposed to a deficient one which needs

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[3] Barry Callen, *Authentic Spirituality: Moving Beyond Mere Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 7.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

to be supplemented from other sources or traditions. A vibrant spirituality ought to be the overflow or external sign of a commitment to biblical truth.[6] While Adams' words ring of truth theoretically, practically this has not by default been the case. The issue, at least in part, appears to be that the scriptures become an end in themselves, not leading the evangelical believer into communion with the God of scripture – into his embrace.

The evangelical church in North America is in need of a revived spirituality. As Dreher states: "The changes that have overtaken the West in modern times have revolutionized everything, even the church, which no longer forms souls but caters to selves."[7] Jean-Claude Sagne stated:

> "The church does not need reformers, it needs saints," says Bernanos. If there is a real opportunity for renewal in the church, it is the birth of a holiness movement among Christians. Mystical experience can only be a sign of this, a manifestation and an unfolding of the holiness which is the reality of the love that inspires and simplifies lives.[8]

If evangelical pastors return to an experience of Christ, they will be in a position to lead the church there as well.

The misassumptions, as discussed above, around the pastoral role have not only had a negative impact on those serving as pastors but upon the institution of the church as well. These misassumptions and misapplications of the pastoral role in contemporary North America have fueled the dominant role of the intellect and institution. The spiritual landscape of the Global North is dotted with

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[6] Adams, *Hearing God's Words*, 20-21.

[7] Dreher, *The Benedict Option*, 9.

[8] Jean-Claude Sagne, "Mysticism: An Opportunity for the Renewal of the Church," in *Mysticism and the Institutional Crisis*, edited by Christian Duquoc and Gustavo Gutiérrez (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 59.

> scores of institutionalized expressions of Christianity that lack spiritual vibrancy or a sense of mission that moves beyond mere survival needs. These congregations and ministries frenetically search for new ways to 'do church' or to accomplish their vision without attending to the fundamental heart issues of their constituency. No methodological fix can stir these groups into being spiritually prepared to practice an obedience that will bring them into an active partnership with God in his mission in the world. The all-too-typical stylistic emphasis does not create communities of faith. It *can* power a mechanical operation that harnesses activism and materialism to build churches that obscure the agenda of God. Although we have the best churches humans can build, God remains conspicuously absent in many of them. Only renewed attention to genuine spiritual preparedness can guarantee the church a legacy in America. Christian organizations focus on the externals, the material, and the political for one main reason: their leaders choose to.[9]

The ministry of the local church, energized by the conviction that the pastoral office has been established and ordained by Christ himself for the edification and guidance of the church, is in need of returning to a ministry which embodies the ministry of Jesus to the world, with the very presence of Christ sustaining the church in its' ministry.[10] The ministry of the local church, as noted, has gone off the tracks, as has the ministry of those called to shepherd the church. The local church pastor must take responsibility for the focus of institutional church.

Glenn Wagner, an evangelical pastor, believes a subtle heresy has been allowed to enter the evangelical church, arising out of concern for the change in tide within North American culture (namely secularization). Those who have allowed the subtle heresy to enter have done so innocently, notes Wagner, and their intentions were good. What this heresy has entailed, however, has actually been devastating for the local church. Wagner explains:

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[9] McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, xiii.

[10] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 50.

> Like Esau, we pastors have sold our biblical birthright as shepherds called by God for the pottage of skills and gimmicks designed by humans. We have misunderstood the role of pastor and defined it incorrectly. We have left our biblical and theological moorings. The result? Our churches are struggling mightily, Christians are wandering from the faith, and pastors are burning out at alarming rates.[11]

Charles Jefferson, in a similar strain of thought, stated: "The pastoral notion is disparaged, not only by many ministers, but also by most of our churches. . . Who has ever heard of a man being called to a church because he was a good shepherd!"[12]

In reflecting upon the current situation within pastoral ministry, Eugene Peterson suggests: "The Pastoral vocation in America is embarrassingly banal. It is banal because it is pursued under the canons of job efficiency and career management. It is banal because it is reduced to the dimensions of a job description. It is banal because it is an idol – a call from God exchanged for an offer by the devil for work that can be measured and manipulated at the convenience of the worker."[13] In his book, *Working the Angles*, Peterson frames it as an abandonment of ones' post. He writes: "American pastors are abandoning their posts, left and right, and at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches and getting other jobs. Congregations still pay their salaries. Their names remain on the church stationary and they continue to appear in pulpits on Sundays. But they are abandoning their posts, their *calling*."[14]

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[11] Wagner, *Escape from Church, Inc.*, 17.

[12] Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, 26.

[13] Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 5.

[14] Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 1.

Willimon describes the cultural context which is feeding this abandonment. He notes that "we live in a capitalist, consumptive culture where there is no purpose to our society other than 'meeting our needs.' The culture gives us the maximum amount of room and encouragement to 'meet our needs' without appearing to pass judgment on which needs are worth meeting." [15] This capitalist, bigger-is-better mentality, Willimon argues, is infecting pastoral work, with pastors laboring to increase the size of their congregation, move up the ladder within their denominations – to be a success as this culture defines it. Within "this vast supermarket of desire," declares Willimon, "we pastors must do more than simply 'meet people's needs.'"[16] For this is one of the very reasons evangelical pastors are burning out – abandoning their posts: they have become exhausted by the ministry demand of meeting people's needs. Willimon goes on to note that this "is dangerous in a society of omnivorous desire, where people, not knowing which desires are worth fulfilling, merely grab at everything. The pastor's ministry ends in fatigue and resentment at having given one's life for a bunch of selfish people who have no other purpose in their lives than the fulfillment of an unexamined, inexhaustible set of false 'needs."[17]

Henri Nouwen, in his thought provoking book *Making All Things New*, offers relevant insight to the context. He writes:

> One of the most obvious characteristics of our daily lives is that we are busy. We experience our days as filled with things to do, people to meet, projects to finish, letters to write, calls to make, and appointments to keep. Our lives often seem like overpacked suitcases bursting at the seams. In fact, we are almost always aware of

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[15] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 60.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

> being behind schedule. There is a nagging sense that there are unfinished tasks, unfulfilled promises, unrealized proposals. There is always something else we should have remembered, done or said. There are always people we did not speak to, write to, or visit. Thus, although we are very busy, we also have a lingering feeling of never really fulfilling our obligations.[18]

The truth and reality of these words hit the mark because the real obligation of pastoral work, to shepherd God's people, is not on the radar. Rather than meeting the needs of God's people, the pastor is to lead God's people into their need of God in all his fullness in every area of their lives. To make this transition in pastoral ministry will require the contemporary evangelical pastor to come to a profound realization, enter into a profound rest, and to take a profound risk.

A Profound Realization

It is a wonderful and profound realization when a pastor comes to the full apprehension of the story of God as found within the biblical texts. In *Flame of Love*, Clark Pinnock shares: "Martin Luther's experience of salvation as justification has skewed the Christian understanding somewhat towards legal terms. Emphasis has been placed on the sinners change of status, from guilty to not guilty, rather than on personal union with God. . . Let us explore salvation now as the beatific vision, as the embrace of God."[19] The metanarrative of scripture is this offer of a divine embrace and through this the restoration of the purpose of human life. Clark Pinnock defines this purpose of life as "a transforming friendship and union with God."[20]

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[18] Nouwen, *Making all things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981), 23-24.

[19] Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 149-150.

[20] Ibid., 152.

A first step in the revitalization of the pastoral role within the evangelical church is for the pastor to once again enter into the invitation of scripture, the Bible being a cornerstone of evangelicalism. "The church's institutions draw their force from the scripture on which they lean," note Duquoc and Gutiérrez, "but they manifest the inherent weakness of a word which is too involved in the human dimension."[21] Within the evangelical tradition, understanding the words of the Bible in their historical context and then applying them to the contemporary church for ministry purposes has appeared "to put a spell on the spiritual creativity of the subject; the words of the Bible are presented more as a law than as the call to a dialogue."[22] The pastor, as shepherd of God's people (the church) must take the first step of once again entering into all the Bible has to offer.

Jean-Claude Sagne, in his article "Mysticism. An Opportunity for the Renewal of the Church," draws a connection between mysticism and church in scripture. He writes:

> It is by a relationship to scripture that mysticism tends to establish itself and become integrated into the life of the church. It is by its relationship to scripture that the church returns to the source of its life and can undergo a renewal. Mystical experience brings to light the life which is contained and hidden in scripture, while the role of the church is to help the reception of scripture in fullness of its meaning. . . The church is the communion of those who receive the Word of God in the obedience of faith. . . Mystical experience is an encounter with God which realizes a word of scripture in life.[23]

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[21] Christian Duquoc and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Mysticism and the Institutional Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1994), ix.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Sagne, "Mysticism," 59.

The pastor must lead the charge in this approach to scripture – receiving from the Bible not merely information but a transformative encounter with the love of God which leads to a very real love of God and love of others in response.

Dennis P. Hollinger, reflecting upon the Shema in the context of Deuteronomy 6:1-9, instructs his readers:

> To believe that God is one involves the mind in an affirmation of thought, but draws on a commitment of the heart that will not assent to any other ultimate commitments in life. . . This belief of the mind and sentiments of the heart are evidenced in daily life by obeying and observing God's commandments. . . The Shema is a clear example of holistic faith that brings the whole of one's self together in the context of a community of believers. . . The firmness of heart could not exist without the theological affirmation that God is one and the actions demonstrating that claim in the realities of everyday life. Without the head, the claims about God's nature as one are exclusive and meaningless; without the heart, such claims are mere rhetoric; without the hands, such claims and their corresponding laws have no life and reality in everyday existence.[24]

It is important to recall that this holistic response to the Word of God is not works based religion or legalism but a response to the grace of God – the God who has loved and therefore redeemed his people. Paul understood this in relation to Christ, stating "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20 ESV).

Robert E. Webber, in *The Divine Embrace*, describes the contours of God's divine embrace as set forth in scripture, a story that invites the reader in to God's embrace. Webber writes:

> God created the world as a place of dwelling and created human beings to be in union with him, to enjoy his creation, to live in it, work in it, play in it, and make it the theater of God's glory. But God's creatures rebelled against God's purposes, went their own way, and developed an anti-God culture full of violence, hate, and

[24] Dennis P. Hollinger, *Head, Heart and Hands: Bringing Together Christian Thought, Passion and Action* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005), 146.

> greed. So out of the Father's all-encompassing love for his creation, God became one of us, "dwelt among us" in the incarnational embrace, and in union with us in Jesus, God restored the union humanity with himself and modeled the purpose of life. True biblical spirituality claims our union with God and the spiritual life that comes forth as a spring of living water from that union is a life that embraces the original purposes of God for creation and creatures.[25]

The contemporary evangelical pastor must once again call God's people into an experiential reading of scripture which will lead them to find themselves in the profound embrace of God through his Word. Jean-Claude Sagne, referencing Bergson, states: "Christian mysticism is simply scripture, but written in letters of fire."[26] This passion for the Word must rise again.

A Profound Rest

Marva Dawn, in *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, makes an important distinction:

> Sometimes when we are really tired, we long desperately just for some "peace and quiet" – by which we mean the absence of hassle and conflict. Unfortunately, however, because we use the word *peace* in such a connotation, we have let the word degenerate into simply another designation for relief. God wants much more for us. The peace he wants to give us goes far beyond merely an absence of conflict. . . The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, begins in reconciliation with God and continues in reconciliation with our sisters and brothers – even our enemies. Moreover, *shalom* designates being at peace with ourselves, health, wealth, fulfillment, satisfaction, contentment, tranquility, and – to sum it all up – wholeness.[27]

The shepherd of God's people, following the example of Jesus, must live a Sabbath lifestyle – by which is exemplified a loving trust in God and care for his people

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[25] Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 126-127.

[26] Sagne, "Mysticism," 60.

[27] Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 137.

which derives from this loving trust of God. Through Sabbath practice, the role of the pastor becomes more unified, the core focus of the pastor becoming his/her relationship with God (founded on grace and love), his/her ministry then finding its' proper priority in the worship of the Lord God. "The most important ordering takes place in our lives," notes Marva Dawn, "when we observe the Sabbath focus of placing God at the center then prioritize everything else in proper relation to that focus. Keeping the Sabbath day constantly reminds us that Yahweh is to be pre-eminent in our lives."[28]

It is in this Sabbath time/way that the embrace of God manifested in the Word of God is practically received and then extended to others. It reorients once again the priorities of ministry around what God has done and ordering one's life as a response to the work of God – by resting in it. Sabbath practice is a reception of YHWH's invitation as he "welcomes us home and extends his arms to any who wish to know peace. It is the day we celebrate the newness of life, created, redeemed, restored, and set free."[29] Hear again the Word of the Lord: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30 ESV).

Dan Allender wisely observes: "Division in relationships is inevitable in a divided world, as divided people who are at odds with our own deepest desires. This is the reality that we wish to escape through our pain-lessening diversions. Sabbath is not a diversion;

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[28] Ibid., 137, 141.

[29] Allender, *Sabbath*, 106.

it is a radical entry into shalom."[30] Much of what passes for pastoral ministry today (counselling or management for example) are diversions created within a church and its pastors who are yet at odds with their own deepest desires. Through the practice of Sabbath as described above, the pastor can begin again to find their deepest desire in life and ministry found in the God who rests, and enter into God's shalom.

A Profound Risk

Shalom is the practical living out of the profound realization of the message of scripture (grounded in the Shema) aided by the profound rest of Sabbath. Shalom is realized in living fully and completely, albeit relationally, under the Lordship of Christ. "Kingdom leadership," notes Larry Perkins, "requires a relationship with the King, the Lord Jesus Christ."[31] This relationship will need to be nurtured by the spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, study, silence, solitude, fasting, and confession. If the pastor's relationship with the Lord weakens, his/her credibility and mandate as God's shepherd lessens as well.[32] The pastor must be in passionate pursuit of the Lord God.

Sloth as one of the seven deadly sins comes into play here. Sloth and biblical shepherd ministry are polar opposites. Sloth, as noted by Chris Webb above, was known to the ancient writers as *accidie* – a listless collapse of spiritual passions. Sloth spiritually is a lack of passion for God and life in his kingdom – a life lived loving God with all of

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[30] Allender, *Sabbath*, 106.

[31] Larry Perkins, *New Testament Texts, Terms & Themes Shaping Church Leadership Today* (Langley, BC: ACTS Seminaries, 2012), 37.

[32] Ibid.

one's heart, mind and soul.[33] It is only in living a passionate life for God, living the Shema grounded in Sabbath, that one finds the peace of God. Henri Nouwen states the following:

> The spiritual life is not a life before, after, or beyond our everyday existence. No, the spiritual life can only be real when it is lived in the midst of the pains and joys of the here and now. Therefore we need to begin with a careful look at the way we think, speak, feel, and act from hour to hour, day to day, week to week, and year to year, in order to become more fully aware of our hunger for the Spirit. As long as we have only a vague feeling of discontent with our present way of living, and only an indefinite desire for "things spiritual," our lives will continue to stagnate in a generalized melancholy.[34]

Today's shepherd-pastors are in need of revitalizing their passion for the Lord their God; to become discontent with the banality of much of what passes for pastoral ministry today. While maintaining orthodoxy and orthopraxy, there needs to be an invigorated orthopathy – an identifying with the passion and compassion of Jesus – as a correction line to the current situation. What is needed is an actual mystical experience of Christ. Christian Duquoc and Gustavo Gutiérrez, in *Mysticism and the Institutional Crisis*, note the conflict between much of the institutional church and mysticism. They write: "What in fact is this issue about? It is about what is beyond question a very old debate in Christianity between the safe course proposed by the institution and the mystical adventure outside the marked tracks."[35] The safe course taken by evangelicalism within the past generation has left it with a dead orthodoxy – void of an authentic orthopraxy derived from a lived experience of Christ in the heart.

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[33] Webb, *God Soaked Life*, 40-41.

[34] Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981), 21-22.

[35] Duquoc and Gutiérrez, *Mysticism and the Institutional Church*, vii.

What is at stake within this debate in Christianity, Duquoc and Gutiérrez suggests, involves suffering and a question. They write:

> Suffering: often as a church we do not know how to listen, we teach dead truths, we get hung up on the pure objectivity of what is said, and take no interest in the destiny of the individual, thinking only in terms of the collective interest. Where that happens the individual is isolated and enslaved to his or her God. It is this practice which is plunging the institutional church into crises.
>
> A question: if institutional intermediaries fail, is it not necessary to turn away from the God that they impose on us and without going through the church approach the God of Jesus who is presented as God of the living? In short, is it not necessary, if we are to find a way to God, to take a route which is close to mystical experience?[36]

The call for the evangelical pastor is to enter again into this experience as part of the evangelical heritage – a conversion experience grounded in the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ, invigorated by the Holy Spirit who pours the love of God into our hearts (Romans 5:5).[37]

A Shepherd and the Sheep

Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, in their book *Why We Love the Church*, seek to encourage Christians not to give up on church. They have written the book for four types of people: *the committed* (those faithfully attending and involved with a local church); *the disgruntled* (committed but unhappy with the limited impact of the church); *the waffling* (those present in church but uninvolved and quietly dissatisfied); and lastly, *the disconnected* (those who have left the church in their quest for God).[38] Those who

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[36] Duquoc and Gutiérrez, *Mysticism and the Institutional Church*, viii.

[37] While not unpacked within the context of this paper, the role of the Holy Spirit is understood to be key in the development of what is discussed herein.

[38] Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2009), 15.

become disgruntled, waffle and eventually disconnect, DeYoung and Kluck suggests, usually do so for one of the following reasons: they feel the church has lost its purpose and relevance in the world/community; lack of authenticity/hypocritical; and the lack of biblical roots for much of what passes as church today.[39] Through a reclaiming of the biblical roots of the pastoral role, grounded in the Shema, the practice of Shabbat, and the experience of Shalom, a shift could be started which would bring change to the experience of many within the institutional church.

It is extremely important that this shift takes place within the church. The reason this is so important is captured well in the words of Pinnock:

> One becomes a person in relationship with other persons, not otherwise. John Donne was right to say no man is an island, because the self is a delicate flower that requires a social context in order to flourish. A child raised by wolves would not become a person, though the potential to become one is there. Similarly, one becomes a Christian by coming into contact with the church – by hearing the good news, encountering the presence of God in the people or in some other way. If there were no church, there would be no Christians either. Church is the sacrament of God which brings his presence near.[40]

If this is understood to be true, then the health and well-being of the church is of utmost importance to the mission of God. The call of the pastor is to ensure the health and well-being of the church!

"The light of Christianity," suggests Dreher, "is flickering out all over the West. There are people alive today who may live to see the effective death of Christianity within our civilization. . . This may not be the end of the world, but it is the end of *a* world, and only the willfully blind will deny it."[41] If the evangelical church in North

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[39] DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We Love the Church*, 16-17.

[40] Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 152.

[41] Dreher, *The Benedict Option*, 8.

America is going to survive, it needs to recognize that it is facing a new world, and as such is in need of reaching back and restoring what has been lost through accommodation, a result, at least in part, of *accidie* in the shepherd-pastor role. The collapse of the Christian consensus this century in the Global North, the secularization of American culture, moral relativism, and the growth in consumerism has not only pushed the church to the margins of the society but has infiltrated the church in a way which disoriented the churches' place and purpose.[42] At this cusp stands the pastor. Speaking to the pastors who find themselves in this context, Dallas Willard instructs:

> We must ask ourselves frequently which role we are fulfilling and constantly return ourselves, if necessary, to the practice of the shepherd. When we lead as shepherds, our confidence is in only one thing: the word of the Great Shepherd, coming through us or, otherwise, to his sheep. . .. Following the practice of the shepherd, we would never stoop to drive, manipulate or manage, relying only on the powers inherent in unassisted human nature (see 1 Peter 4:11).[43]

Wagner, in reflecting upon Jeremiah 10:21 ("The shepherds of my people have lost their senses; they no longer follow God nor ask his will. Therefore they perish, and their flocks are scattered," TLB), suggests that if "we are serious about nursing the church back to robust health, we must first recognize our utter need for the Lord."[44] If the contemporary pastor is going to be an agent for change today, Christ must be central. If the sheep are to have a correct and formative model for living Jesus today, a model for how to respond to the Word of God, their shepherds must be in active communion with

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[42] Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor*, 7.

[43] Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1999), 81.

[44] Wagner, *Escape from Church*, 40.

the Good Shepherd.[45] Rather than creating a subordination within the body of believers (feeding the laos/cleros distinction), this is not a struggle for ascendency but rather "stems solely from authority given by experience in the Way and by the speaking of what is truly God's word."[46] Wagner suggests that visionary leadership is important, and having a specific vision for one's church is not a bad thing, yet at the core of this vison needs to be something permanent. Churches will not be revitalized by merely latching onto the latest program or technique to arise on the market. "The overarching vision," writes Wagner, "must be the Lord's vision for his people."[47] The effectiveness of the pastor in communicating the Lord's vision for his people will in part be contingent on his or her own genuineness in fulfilling their role as shepherd of God's people. Wagner argues, based on Jeremiah 12:10-11, that the root cause of Judah's apostasy was in large part a result of the shepherd's simply not caring about the sheep. "*They didn't care*," states Wagner, "and Judah died."[48]

Writing in 1989, Andrew Purves stated:

> It is not yet clear, however, that the church is equipped to meet the pastoral challenge of the years ahead. On the one hand, spirituality remains today a distant reality for many Christians, especially Protestant Christians. On the other hand, there is profound confusion over the nature of ministry…A renewed spirituality will be a spirituality of Christian maturity in which we are so formed by Jesus Christ that we are transformed by him and come more and more to share his nature…A renewed spirituality will be a process of confrontation, exploration, and struggle with those parts of ourselves that remain resistant to the claims of Christ and his ministry.[49]

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[45] Willard, *Hearing God*, 83-84.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Wagner, *Escape from Church, Inc.*, 28-29.

[48] Ibid., 40.

[49] Purves, *The Search for Compassion*, 13.

Ultimately, while it is not within the pastor's control to cause the hearts of the people to receive the call of God, it is the pastor's responsibility to lead the way in equipping the people of God for just such a change. The shepherd-pastor must take the first step in leading the sheep into this new (yet old) territory of the lived out presence of God through Shema, Shabbat, and Shalom. The first step is a recognition of this calling. Robert Webber states: "To be passionate about something, you need to know what you are passionate about. You cannot be passionate about a nebulous, undefined experience. But you can be passionate about the mystery of God's embrace, which establishes union with him and his vision for the world."[50]

There are essentially four facets to the Christian faith which fall under this pastoral calling: to educate (Psalm 1; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:16), exalt (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Psalm 34:1-3; Psalm 63:1-4; Romans 12:1), encourage (Leviticus 19:18; John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-21), and evangelize (Exodus 19:6; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). It is in understanding the fact that one is loved by God (*education*) – even though they did nothing to warrant such love – and responding to such love by loving God (*exaltation*) and loving one another (*encouragement*) that they become witnesses (*evangelism*) to the transformative love of God in Christ. This is the journey the shepherd-pastor has been called to lead, and as William Willimon states: "It is not an easy vocation, this calling full of peril. Yet it is also a great gift to have one's life caught up in such a pilgrimage."[51]

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[50] Webber, *The Divine Embrace*, 175.

[51] Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 12.

Richard Foster claims:

> Transformation and intimacy both cry out for ministry. We are led through the furnace of God's purity not just for our own sake but for the sake of others. We are drawn up into the bosom of God's love not merely to experience acceptance, but also so we can give his love to others. . . In earlier years we tried to serve out of our spiritual bankruptcy, and we failed. We now know the ministry must flow out of abundance.[52]

May God's shepherds have the boldness to step out once again into the abundance of God in order to lead God's people into God's Shema, God's Shabbat, and God's Shalom. This is crucial for the continued impact of the evangelical church for the Kingdom of God. As Joseph Stowell, in *Shepherding the Church*, notes: "When ministries fail, it is most often not because we have failed to understand or even apply the best techniques and programmatic advances with the flock. We often fail because we have either forgotten or have not known the key to every ministry is the quality of the shepherd who leads."[53]

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[52] Foster, *Prayer*, 177.

[53] Joseph M. Stowell, *Shepherding the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997), 11.

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