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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN EVANGELICALISM IN LIGHT OF LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

BY

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ABSTRACT

A Critical Examination of Contemporary Canadian Evangelicalism
In Light of Luther's Theology of the Cross

In this work the nature of contemporary Canadian evangelicalism will be evaluated in light of Luther's theology of the cross. To commence, a I shall recount a brief history of "evangelicals," tracing the movement from its origins in early sixteenth century Europe at the time of the Protestant Reformation to the present. A four point theological characterization of the contemporary evangelical movement will be outlined. Drawing upon a spectrum of evangelical commentators, leaders and events, I consider the impulses that most typically comprise the evangelical ethos in Canada.

Martin Luther's theology of the cross will then be presented and shown to be an appropriate lens through which to consider evangelicalism, given a common heritage in the Reformation. Finally, the tendencies of contemporary evangelicalism will be evaluated theologically in light of Luther's *theologia crucis*.

RÉSUMÉ

Un examen critique de la tradition évangélique contemporaine canadienne
à la lumière de la Théologie de la Croix de Luther.

Dans ce travail, la nature de la tradition évangélique contemporaine canadienne sera étudiée à la lumière de la théologie de la Croix de Luther. Tout d'abord, une étude des « évangéliques » canadiens visera à retracer les ancêtres de leur mouvement qui a vu le jour au début du seizième siècle en Europe, au temps de la Réforme protestante. Ensuite, après ce bref historique, l'orientation théologique malléable du mouvement évangélique contemporain sera expliquée. En puisant dans le vaste éventail de commentaires et d'événements évangéliques ainsi qu'en consultant bon nombre de dirigeants de cette tradition, je m'attarderai aux aspects qui animent et caractérisent le mieux l'ethos évangélique au Canada.

La théologie de la Croix de Martin Luther sera, par la suite, présentée et s'avérera une lentille appropriée - vu l'héritage commun qu'elles ont reçu du temps de la Réforme - à travers de laquelle la tradition évangélique pourra être considérée. Finalement, les tendances de la tradition évangélique contemporaine seront théologiquement évaluées à la lumière de la *theologia crucis* de Luther.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I consider the nature of contemporary Canadian evangelicalism in light of Luther's theology of the cross. To accomplish this task I chart the following course. First I define the subject. The term "evangelical" has been claimed by a variety of religious movements since the sixteenth century. Chapter one is devoted to plotting a brief history of Canadian evangelicals. I then portray their theological orientation. In chapter two I examine the impulses that most typically characterize evangelicals in Canada today. In chapter three I present Luther's theology of the cross. In chapter four I examine the tendencies of contemporary evangelicalism in light of Luther's *theologia crucis*. Finally, I present some reflections and conclusions arising from this research.

CHAPTER ONE

A HISTORY AND DEFINITION OF CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN EVANGELICALISM

The term "evangelical" can be identified with Philip Schaff's definition of "the Protestant principle." This formula involved as its formal component the supremacy of biblical authority, and as its material element the doctrine of justification by faith.[1] The Reformers brought to a full expression the evangelical impulse that animated earlier persons and movements in the early and medieval church.[2] It is from this wider theological circle that the Reformers themselves drew upon in order to buttress their own arguments. The foundational evangelical attitudes towards personal appropriation of salvation and the importance of the reading of Scripture likely emerged from Italian Benedictine monasteries during the late fifteenth century.[3] The Italian church in particular was deeply and positively affected by the emergence of "evangelicalism" in the 1530s. Several cardinals of the period were profoundly influenced by evangelical attitudes which they did not see as inconsistent with their high positions within the church.

By the 1540s, an increasingly apprehensive church wary of the growing threat posed by northern European followers of Luther, deemed these evangelical ideas and attitudes as unacceptable. Thus, Luther's followers were derisively called "evangelicals" as they stood in the tradition of the Reformer's expression of the gospel.

European evangelicals adopted the epithet. In Germany and Switzerland the word, "evangelical" (*evangelisch*) came into use as a Lutheran designation in contrast with the Calvinist, Reformed church communities.[4] In the eighteenth century, the word was appropriated by a party in the Church of England, "The Evangelicals." They sought to reinvigorate the church by emphasizing personal conversion, salvation by faith in Christ, the authority of the Bible, the value of preaching and an expectation of the imminent return

of Christ to earth.[5]

During the first half of the eighteenth century English-speaking Protestantism entered a new era of renewal. Across England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and all three regions of the North American colonies including in what is now Canada, religious "awakenings" stirred thousands. From this time forward, "evangelical" came to designate specific groups of Christians, irrespective of their denominations, who had a particular approach to the gospel and the Christian life.

These religious revivals were the confluence of intense, personal religious experiences of countless individuals who sustained and furthered the life of the evangelical renaissance. Henry Alline of Nova Scotia recorded his conversion experience in 1775:

> Being almost in agony, I turned very suddenly round in my chair, and seeing part of an old Bible laying in one the chairs, I caught hold of it in great haste; and opening it without any premeditation, cast my eyes on the 38th Psalm, which was the first time I ever saw the word of God. It took hold of me with such power, that it seemed to go through my whole soul, and read therein every thought of my heart, and raised my whole soul with groans and earnest cries to God, so that it seemed as if God was praying in, with, and for me.[6]

David W. Bebbington argues that there are four general characteristics that have marked evangelical Christians in Great Britain and its colonies since the eighteenth century. The four corners of this "creedal quadrilateral" include: "conversionism," "biblicism," "activism," and "crucicentrism."[7] The excerpt from Alline's diary reflects the conversionist distinctive. Conversionism refers to a transforming experience, involving multiple sensory experiences and grasping hold of God's salvation. Put another way, it is a subjective experience of initially appropriating justification by faith in Jesus Christ, "as if God was praying in, with, and for me."

In addition to a stress on conversion, one can observe Bebbington's three other distinctives of evangelicalism within Canadian Protestantism of this period. The Bible was emphasized as being ultimately authoritative (biblicism). There was an accent upon transforming society at large with the gospel message (activism) as well as a focus on Christ's redeeming work on the cross (crucicentrism).[8] In sum, the spirituality of evangelicalism was a Reformation faith, a character it has retained through its development

in the Canadian context.

From its beginnings, Canadian evangelicalism has been a populist movement, directed by this four point ideology and animated by a "peculiar enthusiasm."[9] George A. Rawlyk groups the Canadian evangelicals of the nineteenth century into two major sets. The Baptists and Methodists comprise one group who "sought an *emotional* faith that could not be controlled or manipulated by their 'social betters.'"[10] These are the "radical evangelicals."[11] This group belongs to the "broad historic stream that flows out of the . . . Reformation, down through the Puritan and Pietist channels, and into the . . . evangelical revivals of the eighteenth century."[12] Rawlyk identifies a second major group of Canadian Protestants in this period: the "formalists." They valued an "*ordinary* faith," typically Presbyterians and Anglicans, who stressed "consistent doctrine, decorum in worship, and biblical interpretation through a well-educated ministry."[13]

Rawlyk argues that radical evangelicalism pervaded pre-1812 English-speaking British North America. Close to half of all Protestants were self-confessed "radical evangelicals."[14] Furthermore, there were many "formal evangelicals" who sensitively combined revivalistic Christianity with more formal manifestations of evangelicalism.[15] These were halcyon days for Canadian evangelicalism, its spirituality being "more radical, more anarchistic and more populist than its American counterpart."[16] However, following the War of 1812, radical evangelicalism was pushed to margins of Canadian Protestantism by a burgeoning formal evangelical movement which had a stake in the growing middle class and a taste for British order and respectability.[17] Moreover, they shared a growing suspicion of democratic evangelical and American-style enthusiasm.

Although contemporary evangelicalism appears to be an immense tree with all variety of shoots and branches that appear to have little in common, most denominations draw from the same nineteenth century roots. Along with evangelicals in Great Britain and America, Canadian evangelicals dominated the cultural life of the nation for much of the century, providing the backbone of the English-speaking missionary movement. Evangelicals won important gains in the form of the Lord's Day legislation, temperance and relief for the poor.[18] Establishing their own universities the Methodists, Presbyterians

and Baptists educated society's leaders in the "evangelical creed."[19] Increasingly, evangelicals enjoyed status within Canadian culture as they actively sought to improve it. A variety of evangelical institutions arose that represented a commitment to the basic impulses of evangelicalism but surmounted denominational particularities. This was the first evidence of "transdenominational evangelicalism" that would so characterize the movement in the next century.[20] Sunday schools, YMCAs and YWCAs, temperance and missionary societies, publishing houses and evangelistic missions all attracted evangelicals of different denominations into coalitions to accomplish specific ends.[21] "In those days," notes John Webster Grant, "the term 'evangelical' denoted a belief in the transforming power of faith in Jesus Christ to which the great majority of Protestants would have laid claim."[22]

However, as the century progressed, the movement seemed to lose its nerve. It became increasingly accommodating towards materialism, the autonomy of reason and science, and Protestant liberalism. Middle-class values had begun to temper radical evangelicalism.[23] By the late nineteenth century, evangelicalism in Canada was sustained by a "rational piety" that was "orthodox in certain respects, but not overly committed or enthusiastic."[24] Nevertheless radical evangelical spirituality, fuelled by revivals continued to be promoted until well into the twentieth century.[25]

Protestant liberalism can be described as a movement that attempted to reconcile Christianity with the rationalist ideas of the Enlightenment.[26] The Enlightenment was an eighteenth century Western European intellectual movement that forced a shift in consciousness from the medieval Christian world view which encompassed a commitment to a transcendent God and his revelation to a framework oriented to autonomous humanity and its self-governed material existence.[27] The roots of Protestant liberalism lie in the theology of Schleiermacher, Ritschl and other nineteenth century theologians who attempted to bring the Christian faith "up to date" (*aggiornamento*) consonant with the new climate of the Enlightenment. A salient feature of liberalism was its promulgation of modern biblical criticism. This criticism exposed the human character of the Scriptures as never before. How then could the Bible be regarded as infallible and function as final

norm? Furthermore, this line of critical inquiry revealed the human element that had conditioned doctrinal tradition. The effect was that Christian theology was humbled, beset by fallible sources and fraught with ambiguity.[28]

Protestant liberalism elicited a spirited reaction from evangelicals in Britain and America as it emerged in the nineteenth century. In contrast, the reaction from English Canadian evangelicals was far more muted. The reasons for this moderated reaction remain a matter of debate. In this regard, The Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC) serves as an example.[29] Some scholars credit the strength of Presbyterian preaching and leadership by the time of the First World War as still remarkably vigorous. Brian J. Fraser argues that these churchmen were "heirs and successors to a generation of evangelical Presbyterians who . . . fought to preserve purity and righteousness of a Protestant Canada by means of an aggressive assault on what they considered to be the un-Christian elements in Canadian society . . . [but] were unwilling however, to follow their Idealist mentors in their indifference to or rejection of many of the traditional doctrines of the Christian faith."[30]

Michael Gauvreau suggests that Presbyterian thinkers overcame the challenges of Darwinism and modern biblical criticism by developing a "reverent criticism" that reconciled the conflicts between reason and revelation by making evangelical faith a higher authority.[31] Thus Presbyterian thinkers built a unique and popular theology which blended evangelicalism and selected aspects of Scottish realism.[32] The result was both a moderated and a modernized Calvinist orthodoxy "elaborated in a continuous conversation between evangelicalism and evolutionary thought, . . . lecture hall and pulpit, [which] aptly expressed the continuing ability of a religious outlook that traced its origins to the age of revival."[33]

David B. Marshall disputes the view of Fraser and Gauvreau. He argues that in making accommodation to the pragmatic notions of Scottish realism, these leaders actually hastened the process of secularization by making faith subject to reason instead of revelation.[34] William Klempa believes that the full effect of blending Scottish realism with evangelical piety was to make theology "static and lifeless."[35] Thus, in fact, by the early

twentieth century, Presbyterian academics were promoting the cardinal tenets of Protestant liberalism: "evolutionary idealism, the social gospel and the 'religion of feeling.'"[36]

By about 1910, conservative groups within the Presbyterian Church and other denominations began to close ranks against liberalism, finally siding with their fundamentalist counterparts in Britain and America. The Great War and the Great Depression undermined the confident optimism of liberal evangelicalism and its social gospel of the 1920s. As one church reported after the Armistice in 1918, "The Protestant religion is at least in a trough of a wave, so far as the influence of the church . . . is concerned."[37] While the major, "mainline" Protestant and traditional evangelical denominations of the last century--Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian--experienced unprecedented declines in membership, renewed forms of evangelicalism arose. One form was the so-called "sectarian" movement.

Deriving their appellation from Ernst Troeltsch's influential "church-sect" typology (1931),[38] sectarian groups like the Salvation Army and the Pentecostals "played the role of 'outsider,' . . . [they] engaged with the larger culture only in narrowly 'religious' terms: religious education, direct relief [to the poor] . . . and evangelism above all."[39] These churches lacked bourgeois middle class values many of the mainline churches had come to espouse. Indeed, most contemporary Canadian evangelical denominations were born in an embattled ecclesiastical ferment of "sectarianism, fundamentalism, opposition to church union, and resistance to cultural assimilation"[40] They enjoyed no status in the culture and indeed, consciously separated themselves from "the world" and thus fit conveniently, if not always accurately, into the "church-sect" typology by which most commentators viewed evangelicals in the first three-quarters of this century.[41] Sharing a minimal amount of theological common ground sectarian evangelicals were united in their repudiation of Protestant liberalism.[42]

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada provide a good example of a sectarian movement that did not subscribe to the prevailing liberal evangelicalism of the early twentieth century. Formed as a denomination in 1919, they experienced rapid growth from revivals that were once typical in eighteenth century Canada. A theological hybrid of

Methodism and the Holiness Movement, Pentecostalism reflected the four characteristics of the radical evangelicals of the early nineteenth century. Indeed, the pilgrimage of James Eustace Purdie, who led the first Canadian Pentecostal Bible School from 1925 to 1950, reflects the diverse theological pedigree of the evangelical movement.[43] Purdie was raised in a Pietist tradition and trained for the Anglican parish ministry at Wycliffe College in Toronto.

Another renewed form of early century evangelicalism (which overlapped with the sectarian movement in ideology) was the "fundamentalist" campaign. George M. Marsden coyly defines a fundamentalist as an evangelical who is angry about something.[44] More precisely, Marsden continues, fundamentalists are evangelicals who are militant in their opposition to Protestant liberalism.[45] Fundamentalists took their name from a series of essays written between 1910 and 1915 by American, British and Canadian evangelicals entitled *The Fundamentals*.[46] The agenda was classically evangelical in its affirmation of the four impulses I have described. It reflected a high devotion to reaching lost souls, personal piety, biblical literalism, and a militant refusal to compromise with liberalism. Tellingly, the stance of *The Fundamentals* more or less reflects the disposition of contemporary Canadian evangelicalism. Three aspects of the disposition of contemporary Canadian evangelicalism can be discerned from the ideological standpoint of these essays.

First, *The Fundamentals* allowed for a surprising amount of theological diversity within the parameters mentioned above. For example, there was a refusal to align dispensationalism with orthodoxy. Like premillenialism, dispensationalism was considered too controversial.[47] *The Fundamentals* also avoided making potentially divisive political statements--communism, anarchy and even prohibition--were carefully avoided. The intent seems to have been to build alliances based on mutual tolerance in light of a higher aim. The ability of evangelicals to forge tactical links with other evangelical churches and groups continues as one of the movement's strengths today.

Secondly, the publication suggested an evangelical disposition towards making the gospel comprehensible to the world. Benjamin B. Warfield's apologetic essay is illustrative: "The supreme proof to every Christian of the deity of his Lord is . . . his own

inner experience of the transforming power of his Lord upon the heart and life."[48] In keeping with Scottish realism, Warfield appealed to experience as confirmation of God's existence as certainly as "he who feels the present warmth of the sun knows the sun exists."[49]

A third evangelical disposition reflected in *The Fundamentals* is the desire to respond to the culture with the gospel. In a revealing essay on socialism, Charles Erdman suggested that the church should stay out of politics but that genuine Christian profession was compatible with the personal advocacy of socialism.[50] Missionary leader Robert Speer stressed that the salvation of souls would help free the world "from want and disease and injustice and inequality and impurity and lust and hopelessness and fear."[51]

For many Canadians raised on traditional evangelical orthodoxy, this conservative retrenchment was reasonable and attractive. Fundamentalism took root in all the major Canadian denominations.[52] For example, Dyson Hague, Registrar of Wycliffe College and editor of the *Evangelical Churchman* was a leading Anglican fundamentalist in the 1920s.[53] In a 1917 edition of *The Fundamentals* he assailed "the hypothesis-weaving and speculation... of the German theological profession."[54] In the 1920s the evangelical and liberal wings of the diocese of Toronto feuded continuously. The evangelicals asserted "the principles and doctrines of our Church established at the Reformation" and criticized the "crytpo-Catholic teaching at Trinity College [Wycliffe College's sister Anglican divinity school in Toronto]."[55] In the 1920s, Toronto's august Knox Presbyterian Church was known as "a cathedral for the fundamentalists."[56]

The fundamentalist movement also breathed life into the sectarian movements that now dotted the periphery of the ecclesiastical landscape. In his study of Protestant sectarian groups in Alberta, W.E. Mann identifies 35 sects, of which only four were established before 1900.[57] Ralph Horner's Holiness Movement, the "Adventist" sects and the Mennonites all numerically expanded in the 1920s and 1930s. Meanwhile Canada's "self-consciously fundamentalist" independent evangelical churches also experienced rapid growth nation-wide.[58]

While fundamentalism exercised its influence upon evangelicalism in the first half

of the century, there is little evidence that it has made an enduring impression upon the movement. Rawlyk estimates that today, no more than 2 percent of evangelical churches are fundamentalist.[59] Indeed the most successful, historically "fundamentalist" denomination, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, now declares itself having become "mainstream" within Canadian evangelicalism.[60] Today, Canadian evangelicalism is moderate in temper. Mark A. Noll differentiates the Canadian evangelical experience from that of the United States owing to "the relatively large place in Canadian Protestant history of what is often called 'liberal evangelicalism'--although 'mediating evangelicalism' may in fact be a better term." [61]

The United, Anglican and the Presbyterian churches were Canada's largest Protestant denominations during this period. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. notes that evangelicals saw a prevalence of liberal theology and destructive biblical criticism in the mainline seminaries, a fixation with political causes among denominational leaders and a general neglect of evangelism. Thus evangelicals, including many from within the mainline churches, supported alternative organizations that represented evangelical concerns.[62] Many evangelicals detached themselves from the leading edge of Protestantism in the 1930s. They remained on the cultural margins of Canadian society until the 1980s.[63]

George Morrison, former president of The United Church of Canada's British Columbia conference, believes that the "radically changed positions taken by General Council over the past number of years leave those of us who hold and honour these teachings [regarding Christ] with a crisis of conscience which is simply beyond negotiation and compromise."[64] Morrison's theological conflict with his denomination is typical of the doctrinal wars that have been raging within the mainline churches since the turn of the century--and the reason many evangelically-minded members redirected their energies and resources into alternate churches and organizations.

The evidence suggests that more than evangelical church goers reacted to the mainline churches' drift away from the historical, Protestant distinctives of salvation and the authority of the Bible. Lacking the alternative vision of the evangelicals, Canadian church attenders at large simply turned their backs on the church. In any case, during that

fifty year period Canadian religious life gave way to massive secularization: the process through which religion became disengaged from the Canadian society and lost much of its social significance.[65]

In 1960, *Maclean's* magazine commissioned a survey in the Ontario town of Guelph in order to gauge the influence of the (predominantly mainline) churches' teaching on the spirituality of their attenders. Reflecting upon the data, journalist Ralph Allen wrote,

> Most believe in God and in their churches--or say they do--in the same fashion as their parents. But in their everyday lives they are paying very little real attention to their churches and taking very little guidance from them. . . . By almost every yardstick *their real influence in the secular world is declining fast.*[66]

The article was entitled "The Hidden Failure of Our Churches." But the "failure" did not stay in hiding.

Five years later, journalist and Anglican ex-communicant, Pierre Berton's much-publicized *The Comfortable Pew* (1965) held The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) up to its own standards and found it to be deficient:

> In the great issues of our time, the voice of the Church, when it has been heard at all, has been weak, tardy, equivocal, and irrelevant. . . . In this abdication of leadership, this aloofness from the world, this apathy that breeds apathy, the Church . . . has turned its back on its own principles.[67]

Berton concluded that spiritual complacency had rendered the church irrelevant to many Canadians. Evidently many Anglicans agreed with Berton. From a high of 1,358,000 members in 1961, the rolls of the ACC had shrunk to 720,000 by 1994.[68]

In his recent studies on institutional religion in Canada, Reginald H. Bibby has been restating Berton's critique. Bibby argues that despite ample opportunity and popular interest in spiritual issues on the part of Canadians, the religious institutions are not responding. He contends that the churches have remained largely aloof from Canadian society operating as insulated religious clubs.[69]

Arguably, the churches retaining a fidelity to their evangelical heritage averted the full effects of this precipitous decline in membership that marked the liberalizing Protestant churches. William H. Katerberg believes this phenomenon has characterized the ACC. He notes that while Anglican decline and "evangelical alienation" continued into the early

1990s, it became obvious that "the [Anglican] churches that did show growth tended to . . . offer a clear, orthodox Christian message. . . . Evangelicals . . . experienced modest growth and renewal from the 1950s into the 1990s."[70]

Facing similar challenges the Presbyterian Church has also fared poorly in this century. In his essay, "From Preaching to Propaganda to Marginalization: The Lost Centre of Twentieth-Century Presbyterianism," Barry Mack offers a sobering account of the last 100 years of Canadian Presbyterianism. He dubs the twentieth century as "the century of disaster" in which "the full-orbed evangelicalism, [the] theological centre of the Presbyterian Church in the 1890s, . . . [gave] way in the early years of the twentieth century, first to a moralistic obsession with national regeneration and then, after the debacle of Church Union in 1925, to a reactionary narrowing of the evangelical tradition."[71] Although more religiously conservative than the United Church, its once robust evangelical vision has been compromised by theological pluralism, weak denominational leadership and evangelical retreat.[72] While Mack sees some hopeful signs, the church's witness has been consigned to the margins as a "small minority group in a religiously pluralistic society."[73] The result is a century of numeric decline. In 1926, the year after church union, the PCC had a membership of 160,000. Seventy years later its aging congregations total about the same number of members.

What are the parameters that define an evangelical today? In his study, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour? In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (1996), George Rawlyk sought to identify the characteristics of contemporary Canadian evangelicals. He includes many personal accounts of self-defined evangelical Christians from across the spectrum of Canadian denominations.[74] One such profile is that of Barbara, a forty-five to fifty-four year old Ontarian.[75] Barbara was raised in the United Church but is now a Convention Baptist. She is more comfortable with "Presbyterians and those in the United Church"[76] than she is with more conservative Baptists. She considers the Bible "as the inspired Word of God," and "true, but not word for word."[77] Barbara spends about an hour a week reading the Bible. She considers religious broadcasts a "waste of time." She strongly believes in witnessing because of "what Jesus commanded

us to do," but insists that she is careful about not forcing her faith upon anyone.[78] She prays every day, "never for longer than five minutes."[79] She regards praying as "talking to God," although she likes to recite the Lord's Prayer. She recalls a "conversion experience or awakening--a turning point in my life" as a physical and spiritual redemption brought about by the infusion of God.[80] She believes in the Trinity but admits to having trouble separating "the three persons of the Trinity."[81] Barbara is content to describe Christ in the same way that she describes God the Father as "loving, caring" but believes that "you have to believe in Christ to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."[82] The cross is important to her. Barbara explains: "Christ died on the cross for our sins--this is torture--I think it's a horrible, horrible thing. . . . You have to believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins."[83] The cross also represents Barbara's "nurturing." She states: "That's the way it's always been and I don't question it."[84] Her conversion brought energy and vitality to her spiritual life while her Baptist church community keeps it resonating.

Barbara's odyssey accords with Lane Dennis's observation that "the hallmark of evangelicalism has been its emphasis upon the experience of personal salvation."[85] The essence of contemporary evangelical spirituality is a religious experience that is typically articulated in a shared theological language. In fact, Barbara's story and religious orientation presents a fairly typical representation of the widely diffuse contemporary experience of evangelical spirituality in Canada.

The strong experiential emphasis seen in Barbara represents a subtle shift in the way evangelical Christians define themselves. In a recent catechetical guidebook written to introduce converts to the family of faith, William W. Wells cites three specific characteristics of those who belong to the movement: evangelicals affirm the Bible as authoritative; they appropriate God's forgiveness and enjoy a personal relationship with God through Christ; and they commit themselves to pursuing a holy life through the spiritual disciplines.[86] Wells could have been describing Barbara's spiritual orientation. While evangelicals continue to value biblical authority, it is noted that the latter two of these three distinctives focus upon religious experience or "spirituality." Stanley J. Grenz contends that since the charismatic renewal of the 1960s evangelicalism has recovered a

sense of the experiential that was lost in the fundamentalist focus on the rational and on doctrine.[87] Indeed, one quarter of Rawlyk's "evangelical" sampling in his 1993 study were practising Roman Catholics indicating the shift of emphasis from doctrine to the more amorphous sphere of the experiential.

This multi-valency of evangelical characteristics points back to the expansive Bebbington description. Recognizing "the delicate task of definition,"[88] he believes that evangelicals are still conversionist, biblicistic, activist and crucicentric. Obviously this typology does not fit every "evangelical" cheek by jowl; each group within the Canadian constellation of evangelicalism places a distinctive stress upon the individual components in different measures of this "quadrilateral ideology." Nevertheless, theologically, the essence of the evangelical identity remains within the heritage of the Reformation Protestantism upholding the supremacy of biblical authority and the doctrine of justification by faith. It has weathered the liberal challenges that were acute at the beginning of the twentieth century. On the other hand it has also sustained the reactionary fundamentalist impulse towards theological reductionism.[89] Evangelicalism's accent upon religious experience accords with Luther's capacity for "sheer inwardness" (in Kierkegaard's fine phrase) that pitted him against "all ontologizing and objectifying influences that would introduce *rigor mortis* into faith itself."[90]

It is thus my contention that Canadian evangelicalism, for all of its diversity, is still recognizable as Luther's evangelical progeny 450 years after his death. It may then be critically audited in light of Luther's polemical theology of the cross with meaningful result. How might one proceed to examine critically this diverse movement? Jesus states that by their fruits the professing Christians will be known and judged (Matt. 7:20).[91] While evangelicalism can be recognized as a Reformation-based expression of Protestantism that is fuelled by experience, it ought to be evaluated in light of its "fruit," its actions, its disposition.

NOTES

1. See Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism*, trans. J.W. Nevin (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964).

2. It was assumed by both the Magisterial and the Radical Reformers that religious experience was operative alongside *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. For example as H. Schmidt notes, the Lutheran theology of justification demanded, "with passionate intensity an internalization of religious life," in the face of scholasticism, "a widely externalized Christianity." As quoted in Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*, trans. by Thomas Collins, Edmund Evangelical. Tolk and David Granskou (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), 281.

3. See Barry Collett *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

4. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

5. John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 6.

6. "Alline's Journal," in *Henry Alline: Selected Writings*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 85-86.

7. See David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History From the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-17.

8. George A. Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour? In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 9.

9. Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion, with Special Reference to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

10. Curtis Johnson, *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1993), 8.

11. Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 10.

12. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 7.

13. Johnson, *Redeeming America*, 7.

14. See George A. Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 121-22.

15. Ibid., 185-206.

16. Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 11.

17. Ibid., 11.

18. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 9.

19. See Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 13-56.

20. See David Bebbington, "Evangelicalism in Its Settings: The British and American Movements Since 1940," in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990*, eds. David W. Bebbington, Mark A. Noll and George A. Rawlyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 365-88.

21. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 9.

22. John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 167.

23. Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 13.

24. Ibid., 12.

25. Marguerite Van Die, "'The Double Vision': Evangelical Piety as Derivative and Indigenous in Victorian English Canada" in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990*, eds. David W. Bebbington, Mark A. Noll and George A. Rawlyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 265.

26. Robert A. Wright, "The Canadian Protestant Tradition 1914-1945," in *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760-1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Burlington, Ont.: Welch Publishing, 1990), 157.

27. Clark H. Pinnock, *Tracking the Maze: Finding Our Way Through Modern Theology From An Evangelical Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 82.

28. Ibid., 87.

29. In "'Crackling Sounds from the Burning Bush': The Evangelical Impulse in Canadian Presbyterianism Before 1875" (1997), Duff Crerar surveys the differing opinions historians advance regarding the PCC's response to the European tide of liberal modernist thought that was washing over Canada's shores. In *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 123-36.

30. Brian J. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), 173-74.

31. Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century*, 2-12, 20-3, 32-45, 58-66, 71-83, 91-104, 139-60.

32. According to William Klempa, "Scottish realism" or "Common Sense realism" was the "prevailing philosophical influence" among Presbyterians in Canada until 1870. Scottish realism was founded by Thomas Reid (1710-96) in opposition to the philosophical skepticism of David Hume (1711-76). Reid argued that certain truths are self-evident to anyone of sound mind or not captive to some unsound philosophical theory. One's awareness of these truths is elicited by but not derived from experience. "History of Presbyterian Theology in Canada to 1875," in *The Burning Bush and A Few Acres of Snow: The Presbyterian Contribution to Canadian Life and Culture*, ed. W. Klempa (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), 205.

In the early nineteenth century, Scottish realism was brought to North America and was dominant for varying lengths of time among Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Anglicans and Unitarians. Klempa quotes a sermon delivered by Alexander Spark to his congregation in Quebec City (1799) that aptly captures the moderating, "reasonable" appeal of Scottish realism: "Piety, morality, and public faith must go hand in hand. Religion corrects the irregular propensities of the heart--gives strength and stability to virtuous purposes, and cherishes those dispositions, and that temper of mind which are most friendly to peace, order, and good government." Ibid., 206.

33. Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century*, 160.

34. David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 4-10, 21-3, 25-40, 57-64.

35. Klempa, *The Burning Bush and A Few Acres of Snow: The Presbyterian Contribution to Canadian Life and Culture*, ed. W. Klempa (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), 214.

36. Ibid.

37. As quoted in R.A. Wright, *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760-1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Burlington, Ont.: Welch Publishing, 1990), 140.

38. See Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), vol. 2.

39. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 12-13.

40. John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), 129.

41. In the opinion of John Stackhouse, sectarian religion has been dismissed, or at best, unappreciated by Canadian mainline church historians. The scholarly treatment of these "non-mainline" groups (denominations other than Roman Catholic, United, Anglican, Presbyterian and members of the Canadian Baptist Federation) has been limited to a "church-sect typology" that is, like its theorist Ernst Troeltsch, European in origin. *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 12-13. For the first example of this typology used later by Walsh, Moir and Mol, see S.D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948). Arguably, these appellations do not exactly apply to the Canadian situation in which there are no established churches and dissenting sects. Until the 1970s, "sect," as it was used in the North American context, referred to a religious group that enjoyed no status in the culture, but consciously separated itself from it. The sect was made up of "believers" who had consciously joined the church and maintained its intellectual and behavioural standards.

42. See Clark H. Pinnock, "Not a Panacea to the Rest of the Church," *ChristianWeek*, March 28, 1995, 11.

43. Harold Jantz, "Pentecostal Movement in Canada Developed Distinct Character," *ChristianWeek*, May 7, 1996, 9.

44. George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1.

45. Ibid., 1.

46. David R. Elliott, "Knowing No Borders," in *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States*, eds. G.A. Rawlyk and Mark A. Noll (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), 350 ff.

47. However, as George M. Marsden notes, many of *The Fundamentals* contributors promoted their dispensationalist views in other publications. *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 119.

48. Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Deity of Christ," *The Fundamentals*, I, 22-23 as quoted in Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 121.

49. Ibid.

50. Charles Erdman, "The Church and Socialism," *The Fundamentals*, XII, 109-19 as quoted in ibid., 120.

51. Robert Speer, "Foreign Missions or World-Wide Evangelism," *The Fundamentals*, XII, 73 as quoted in ibid.

52. Ian S. Rennie makes an interesting point. In his study, "Fundamentalism and the Varieties of North Atlantic Evangelicalism" (1994), he discovered that "Canadian fundamentalism, though often regarded as an extension of influences from the United States, was thoroughly British in both origin and emphasis." Its leadership in Canada was composed of urban British or British-educated men. They were doubtless familiar with American fundamentalism but their heritage as Christians, however, was overwhelmingly British. *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990*, eds. David W. Bebbington, Mark A. Noll and George A. Rawlyk. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 345.

53. R.A. Wright, *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760-1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Burlington, Ont.: Welch Publishing, 1990), 161.

54. As quoted in ibid., 161.

55. As quoted in ibid., 161.

56. Rennie, *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990*, eds. David W. Bebbington, Mark A. Noll and George A. Rawlyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 343.

57. See W.E. Mann *Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1955).

58. R.A. Wright, *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760-1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Burlington Ont.: Welch Publishing, 1990), 163.

59. Bob Harvey, "Media Backs Off 'Fundamentalist' Stereotyping," *ChristianWeek*, November 30, 1993, 4.

60. See Debra Fieguth, "Largest Evangelical Denomination has Earned its Place," *ChristianWeek*, May 7, 1996, 7.

61. Mark A. Noll, "A View From the United States," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 17.

62. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 185.

63. George A. Rawlyk, "Introduction," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. G.A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), xvii.

64. George Morrison, "Reconciliation: Is There Hope for the United Church?" interview by Carol Thiessen, *ChristianWeek*, March 28, 1995, 16.

65. For a helpful explanation of the process of secularization, see Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 90-92. For an example of this process at work within the the Canadian experience over the past fifty years, see John G. Stackhouse, Jr., "Canada's Secular Slide," *Christianity Today*, July 18, 1994, 38.

66. Ralph Allen, "The Hidden Failure of Our Churches," *Maclean's*, February 25, 1961, 11, italics mine.

67. Pierre Berton, *The Comfortable Pew* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 30.

68. William H. Katerberg, "Canadian Evangelicalism in the Canadian Anglican Church: Wycliffe College and the Evangelical Party, 1867-1995" in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 183.

69. See Reginald H. Bibby, *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Company, 1993), 281-83.

70. Katerberg, *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 185.

71. Barry Mack, "From Preaching to Propaganda to Marginalization: The Lost Centre of Twentieth-Century Presbyterianism," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 137-38.

72. Ibid., 151-53.

73. Ibid., 152.

74. Rawlyk explains how the study was constructed:

> A complex "evangelical scale" involving ten variables concerned with religious

> practice and belief . . . was used to determine that 16 per cent of the Canadian population was evangelical. . . . A version of the Christian Evangelicalism Scale (CES) was used in 1993 involving 6,014 randomly selected adult Canadians, resulting in the identification of about 960 evangelicals. In the hope of discovering even more information about this evangelical group, it was decided to question further a subset of 365. . . . Interviewers from the Angus Reid Group placed calls during the summer of 1993, asking to speak a person who fit the relevant demographic profile. All respondents were re-screened using the questions from the CES. And those who met the CES criteria were included in the final sample of 365. This sample included 85 mainline Protestants, 95 Roman Catholics, and 130 conservative Protestants.

Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 118. Henceforth I will refer to this study as "Rawlyk's 1993 survey."

75. Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 188-90.

76. As quoted in ibid., 189.

77. As quoted in ibid.

78. As quoted in ibid.

79. As quoted in ibid.

80. As quoted in ibid., 189-90.

81. As quoted in ibid., 190.

82. As quoted in ibid.

83. As quoted in ibid.

84. As quoted in ibid.

85. Lane Dennis, "A Call to Holistic Salvation," in *The Orthodox Evangelicals*," eds. Robert E. Webber and Donald G. Bloesch (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 95.

86. William W. Wells, *Welcome to the Family: An Introduction to Evangelical Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 10.

87. Stanley J. Grenz, "Seeking the Evangelical Essentials," interview by Krysia P. Lear, *Faith Today*, May June 1995, 18.

88. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington and George A. Rawlyk, "Introduction," in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990*, eds. D.W. Bebbington, M.A. Noll and G.A. Rawlyk

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 6.

89. Clark Pinnock defines evangelicalism as the movement that *resulted* from the fundamentalist-modernist debates of the early twentieth century in North America! *Tracking the Maze*, x.

90. Ernest Koenker, "Søren Kierkegaard on Luther," in *Interpreters of Luther*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 235.

91. Matt. 7:20: "Thus you will know them by their fruits."

CHAPTER TWO

THE DISPOSITION OF CANADIAN EVANGELICALS

In chapter one attention was directed to, historically, what evangelicals have believed. The subject of this chapter will be how Canadian evangelicals behave.[1] Indeed, as A. Brian McKillop has perceptively noted, Canadian evangelicalism is less a program than it is "a temper, a disposition."[2] Consonant with its antecedents in the Protestant Reformation, the movement's ethos owes much to the thought of John Calvin (1509-1564).

Calvin's doctrine of providence characterizes the Creator as ruling over all earthly events for his good pleasure, because he alone is glorious.[3] Calvin saw earthly matters from a divine perspective. Since God was actively at work in the sphere of earthly affairs, Calvin reasoned that earthly existence was significant. He saw God not as a "perpetual observer" (Tillich) of the world but rather as one who is actively engaged in the workings of the world.[4] Calvin's view of commerce serves an instructive example. He saw the commercial world as a sphere in which one could live as a Christian and spread the goodness of God's material blessing throughout society. In his commentary on Matt. 25:10,[5] Calvin states:

> Those who employ usefully whatever God had committed them are said to be engaged in trading [*negotiari*]. The life of the godly is justly compared to trading, for they ought naturally to exchange and barter with one another, in order to maintain intercourse; and industry with which every man discharges the office assigned to him, the calling [*vocatio*] itself, the power of acting properly.[6]

Calvin saw no distinction between the sacred and the secular. Illustrative of his "secularization of holiness" (Hauser), work is given religious consequence in light of God's providence and social benefit.[7]

Roland H. Bainton trenchantly remarks that when Christianity takes itself seriously,

it must either renounce or master the world.[8] Calvin's enduring significance for the Christian church lies, in part, in his refusal to set James and Paul against each other; he did not pit justification by faith against the doing of good works. His emphasis upon works marks out his impetus for the Christian to engage and seek to influence the world which he or she inhabits. Ernst Troeltsch remarks that indeed, Calvinism was led to "a systematic endeavour to mould the life of Society as a whole, to a kind of 'Christian Socialism.'. . . It lays down the principle that the Christian ought to be interested in all sides of life."[9] Thus, Calvin bequeathed a "world-affirming" disposition to Protestantism.

While Canadian evangelicals have differed in their response to their cultural surroundings, the current orientation is consistent with Calvin's world-affirming position (although evangelicals do not always maintain Calvin's circumspect balance between the sacred and the secular.)[10] Thus, evangelicals are willing to "accommodate" themselves to the modern fruits of Canadian society--tolerance for diversity, technology, principles of management etc--so as to engage the modern world more effectively. The evangelical hope is that God will make their efforts "world formative" (Wolterstorff);[11] that through participation in the culture, society will be leavened by the Spirit-inspired behaviour of Christians and that in addition, individuals in that society "may be saved" (1 Cor. 10:33).[12]

I shall now consider the tendencies of Canadian evangelicalism with an eye to this "accommodationism" that marks the movement in the late twentieth century. Evangelicals have tended to be temperate in their outlook, at least compared to their evangelical neighbours in the United States. Mark Noll argues that "Canadian evangelicalism has featured somewhat less polemics and a somewhat more accommodating spirit."[13] The interwar period seemed to galvanize Canadian Protestants of all stripes to recover a concern for the world "against the ruthless enemies of the mid-20th century" by embracing the challenge of a new "Christian internationalism."[14] However, by 1930, Protestant experiments with cultural engagement like Prohibition and the federal Progressive Party began to sour and eventually the Protestant consensus collapsed.[15] For the next five decades Canadian evangelicals were uncharacteristically "unaccomodationist." John Stackhouse observes two re-configurations within evangelicalism on the issue of cultural

participation that transpired in the post-war period:

> Those evangelicals who had once been more comfortable in that larger culture began to set up alternative institutions to those they saw to have been compromised, and in this they began to resemble more their "sectish" siblings. By contrast the "sectish" [fundamentalist] evangelicals, perhaps owing to a rise in social and economic standing, perhaps because of the erosion of the "mainline" alternative that had seemed to them to be the proprietor of contemporary culture, and perhaps through new sensitivity to the needs of Canadians on the post-Victorian religious situation, began to open up to a wider vision of ministry. This development led them to improve their educational institutions and join with the "churchish" [non-fundamentalist] evangelicals in projects of cultural influence beyond the evangelistic. . . . Canadian evangelicals, then, were reacting against certain modern trends and forces, . . . but they were responding to those challenges in new ways and with some success.[16]

Lacking the militancy and sense of diminished cultural authority that marked the American experience, in the 1950s and 1960s Canadian evangelicals quietly devised approaches to engage the world on their terms. They built their own schools for advanced theology (e.g., Regent College, Ontario Theological Seminary, the Institute for Christian Studies etc.) and began to pour their resources into "parachurch" ministries (e.g., the *Sermons from Science* pavilion at Expo 67) more reflective of their theologically conservative positions.

As Stackhouse implies, these endeavours were effective in generating sheer numbers of respondents. For example, Regent College is now the largest religious graduate school in Canada. *Sermons from Science* attracted almost a half million visitors to its evangelistic presentations over the six summers that it operated on the *Man and his World* site in Montreal.[17] Gratified and growing in confidence from these successful ventures, in the 1980s evangelical leaders began to reflect upon how they could begin to re-engage Canadian society at large. To employ H. Richard Niebuhr's typology, evangelicalism gradually moved from a place of cultural isolationism, a "Christ against culture" orientation, to a more moderate and Calvinist "Christ transforming culture."[18] Evangelicals began to adopt a world-affirming concern for renewing society with the "salt and light" of the gospel (Matt. 5:13-16).[19]

The history of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) presents a concrete example of evangelicalism's journey from cultural estrangement back into the cultural

mainstream. The EFC was founded in Toronto in 1964 as a fellowship of evangelical pastors.[20] They reflected a wide spectrum of denominations that included mainline Protestant evangelically-minded pastors as well as more traditionally evangelical groups like the Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Associated Gospel Churches. A constitution was ratified in 1966 which delimited the evangelical boundaries from the more theologically liberal attitudes generally characteristic of the mainline churches. This constitution sought to elicit an evangelical commitment to unity so as to "make their co-operative thrust more relevant and effective, particularly in the articulation of the great, historic truths of the Word of God."[21] The EFC's statement of purpose boiled down to a determination to spread the gospel.[22]

In 1968, the EFC began publishing *Thrust* magazine. It was sent to those on the Fellowship's mailing list that numbered over 10,000. The magazine dealt with typical evangelical concerns of the day: biblical authority, personal spirituality and missions. It also introduced evangelicals to wider horizons: to other evangelical denominations and the church worldwide. The EFC began to address concerns that were percolating within secular Canadian society. For example, in the 1970s it discussed the morality of government-sponsored lotteries; at another juncture in this decade it pondered the treatment of women in Canadian society. The EFC took a further step in making its social commitment to the world concrete by assuming direction of a relief and development agency in 1982.

The EFC revised its constitution in 1981. In the opinion of Stackhouse, this modified version reflected a "wider vision" than its original charter in three respects.[23] First it no longer pitted the EFC against the "negative forces" in the church. Enemies that were identified for censure in the first constitution like "liberalism," "apostasy" and "spiritual nihilism" were not specified in the revision. The new constitution struck a positive tone and committed itself to improving the church rather than standing as its theological guardian. Secondly, the new charter sought to foster church unity. The third evidence of a wider view was the declaration that this unity would be the basis by which the EFC represented the cause of Canadian evangelicals in lobbying legislators in order to "to bring

moral direction in government decisions."[24] The constitution states that this "relationship with government will assist in practical ways; provide for liaison in united manner with government agencies; and be a means of influence to protect the rights and freedoms of individual Christians, of the Church, and Christian institutions."[25] The updated constitution aptly reflects the recovering of evangelicalism's world-affirming impulse in two ways. It acknowledges intra-evangelical pluralism and secondly, it recognizes the presence of government as an agent of change and points to a growing participation as a group within society.

The EFC hired Brian C. Stiller as their first full-time executive director in 1982.[26] Stiller pursued the objectives of the new EFC charter vigorously. *Thrust* was retired and replaced with a more temperate publication, *Faith Today*. With a current circulation of over 20,000, the magazine describes itself as "Canada's evangelical news/feature magazine." In keeping with its masthead claim, *Faith Today* discusses a broad range of social concerns that affect evangelicals by typically inviting a cadre of evangelical leaders and observers to lend their opinions to these topics. For example, in 1996 the magazine published six issues devoted to the men's movement, the cell church movement, art and faith, Christians on the Internet, sexuality and Christian identity and lastly, the parachurch movement. Of these themes, the men's movement, art, the Internet and sexuality are issues that preoccupy the culture at large while cell churches, and the parachurch movement are, of course, more "in-house" concerns. The balance reflects evangelicalism's renewed orientation of engagement with its host culture.

Stiller's tenure has seen other initiatives that reflect this disposition to Canadian society. Under his leadership, the EFC has sponsored four commissions: one each on the family, social action, evangelism and public education. Over the past ten years the EFC has lobbied various levels of Canadian governments over the legal status of homosexual partnerships, the impingement of the freedom of religion, abortion access and the protection of the family unit. *Understanding Our Times*, is a quarterly newsletter dedicated to helping evangelical churches engage their society over these issues from an evangelical framework. In 1989, Stiller began to represent these positions on the nationally

televised *The Stiller Report*. Currently, the EFC represents 28 denominations and related congregations, approximately 150 mission and independent church-related organizations and more than 14,000 individual members.[27] The organization now has 30 full time employees and a budget of $3 million.

Stackhouse believes that the EFC's direction has served notice that "evangelicals [are] moving back into involvement with Canadian cultural life, concerned not merely to separate from it but to influence it according to a broad sense of God's call to the church and to the world."[28] In a manner that mirrors EFC's gradual journey towards a more world-affirming posture, evangelicals have also made inroads into their society in the past 35 years. In learning to wield tools like the EFC, they have influenced legislation, widened the charters of its "Christian schools" and tended growing churches.

Exactly what that call to cultural participation actually signifies varies according to different evangelicals. However, most would agree with Stiller when he argues (consistent with Calvin) that cultural participation is a matter of religious integrity for Christians.[29] Stiller writes: "At stake is the Christ of our life who calls us to live out His life."[30] Conditional upon that call, "There are times [when our stand] may result in conflict with the prevailing culture. At other times it may lead us in its support. But at all times we are called to light the candle of his truth regardless of benefit or cost."[31] In the same vein, Donald C. Posterski argues that Christians must learn how to "make pluralism work" for the cause of the gospel. He urges evangelicals to recognize that Canada's cultural pluralism presents a challenge and an opportunity for Christians to re-define their identity and take a stand within the culture. Posterski states that the church's future role must include "a clear voice among the other cultural voices. A voice that is distinctive. A voice that articulates the ways of God and the teachings of Christ."[32]

Yet, evangelicalism puts itself at risk when it engages the culture. Evangelicalism has always been more of a "way of life" than "a theological system" presenting itself to its adherents as "a series of vivid and compelling personal experiences" rather than as "a logical set of beliefs."[33] As such, in the wake of a strong creedal identity, evangelicalism tends to accommodate itself uncritically to the prevailing culture. David F. Wells

comments that whereas "fundamentalism was a walled city; evangelicalism is a city... [that] has lowered the barricades. It is open to the world."[34] During its transition from being a world-renouncing, fundamentalist ideology on the way to its present world-affirming ethos, contemporary evangelicalism misplaced its doctrinal underpinnings (and Calvin's suspicions of secularity). Tellingly, in his studies of Canadian evangelicalism, George Rawlyk consistently classifies the movement as "irenic" and "cooperative."[35] One explanation for this tolerance is the uncritically accommodationist tendency of evangelicalism towards other cultural and religious philosophies that surround it.

In *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1962) Richard Hofstadter cited "the evangelical spirit" as a chief culprit behind the nation's intellectual paucity.[36] Could the same indictment be made of Canadian evangelicals? One of the most controversial expressions within Canadian evangelical life is the "Toronto Blessing." Since January 20, 1994, there have been meetings at Toronto's west-end Airport Vineyard Church six nights of the week.[37] Hundreds of thousands have attended the church since January, 1994. A typical service includes chorus singing, testimonies and a sermon. At the end of the sermon, attenders are invited to line up for "ministry time" in the back of the building along yellow lines on the carpeted floor. Journalist Robert Hough filed this account of the ministry time for *Toronto Life Magazine*: "People fell like dominoes... they howled like wolves, brayed like donkeys.... Never have I seen people weep so hysterically, as though every hurt they'd ever encountered has risen to the surface like an overheated tar bubble."[38] Some evangelicals consider the events at this church to be a second Pentecost, others dismiss the Toronto Blessing as psychological manipulation on a grand scale.[39] Nevertheless, the Blessing and the "charismatic evangelicals"[40] reflect a significant evangelical constituency. James A. Beverley, a sympathetic critic notwithstanding, chides the Toronto Blessing for weak preaching, a reductionist view of the Holy Spirit, an anti-intellectual spirit, a faulty understanding of signs and wonders, and a lack of emphasis upon the person of Christ.[41] Beverley's critique of the anti-intellectual tendencies of the Blessing can also be applied to numerous evangelical churches, trends and initiatives.

Os Guinness charges: "Most evangelicals simply don't think. . . . For the longest

time we didn't pay the cultural price . . . because we had the numbers, the social zeal, and the spiritual passion for the gospel."[42] In considering the Canadian situation, John Stackhouse is more tempered in his assessment. However he notices the perceptible lack of cultural influence that marks evangelicalism in the 1990s:

> Late twentieth-century evangelicals have little practice still in producing comprehensive and penetrating analyses of society and in offering judicious and winsome prescriptions for its ills. There is no significant journal of ideas for Canadian evangelicals. . . . There are no evangelical pundits who command attention from the leading media.[43]

It would seem that evangelicals in Canada are now paying culturally the price for the intellectual lapse of modern evangelicalism. The robust social vision that characterized its piety in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has diminished. Contemporary evangelicalism tends to pursue its own interests with the restricted vision of a subculture; evangelicals are more concerned with "just us" than they are with justice.

The disposition of Canadian evangelicalism can be better apprehended by musing upon the kinds of events to which it commits itself. In 1995, a *Sacred Assembly* was called by an evangelical aboriginal Member of Parliament, Elijah Harper. The assembly's purpose was to "restore a common spiritual foundation" from which to address aboriginal justice issues and to craft a healing process for reconciliation between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities in Canada.[44] The assembly was reflective of evangelicalism inasmuch as it was conceived, planned and executed by evangelicals. Refreshingly, in this case, evangelicals were able to look beyond their own subculture to the needs of the wider society. One journalist described the three day summit in December of 1995 as "a gathering unlike any other":[45]

> Mainline churches, moderate evangelicals and conservative charismatics joined with those whose beliefs stem from a traditional native spirituality. . . . There was representation from the Jewish and Hindu faiths. . . . The significance of the assembly was seen in the roster of guests, who included National Chief Ovide Mercredi, as well as Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Indian Affairs minister Ron Irwin. Other high-ranking chiefs and heads of churches and faith organizations were also present.
>
> The gathering came together in a relatively short period of time. Grieved by the summer's conflicts, especially at Ipperwash, Ontario, and Gustafsen Lake, B.C., Elijah Harper, MP for Churchill, Manitoba, searched for an answer to an

> escalating crisis. . . . Careful to articulate his faith in general terms when in public, Harper nevertheless drew strong Christians, both Aboriginal and white, into the planning process. . . . Church leaders gave presentations on the theme of spiritual reconciliation, and included apologies on behalf of their own denominations or groups. Among them were Anglican Primate Michael Peers, United Church moderator Marion Best, [and] Roman Catholic Bishop Remi de Roo. . . . Brian Stiller . . . spoke for a wide evangelical constituency . . . : 'Where there's injustice, that's where Christ is: in pain and sorrow and poverty. That's where God is and where he chooses to be.'[46]

The Sacred Assembly throws into relief three impulses that condition the evangelical signature of societal participation: (1) a limited tolerance for diverse participation of ecclesial and theological expressions under its banner, (2) a sensitivity to its context and finally, (3) a resolve to act in order to satisfy those needs with the gospel message.

(1) Tolerance for diversity

The Sacred Assembly reflected the willingness of evangelicalism to accept and work alongside other faith expressions, within certain limits. Mohawk evangelist Ross Maracle stated that the assembly was "a great time of *listening*" to a people from a vast spectrum.[47] Another attender, Thelma Meade, an Ojibway Christian recalls that "while there was an attempt to understand those with different beliefs, recognition for the need to respect came mostly from Christians."[48] Indeed, contemporary evangelicalism aspires to be an "open city" in a pluralist society. Meaningful dialogue with those of profoundly different convictions is a relatively new phenomenon for Canadian evangelicals.

Presently, there are an estimated 100 Christian denominations within Canada.[49] It is reductionist to underestimate decisive differences among evangelicals in this denominational universe. Evangelicals in the United Church see the world and their faith differently from those who are Mennonites; Christian and Missionary Alliance evangelicals are distinct from Presbyterian evangelicals and so on. As Noll suggests, this intra-evangelical diversity is so significant that it would be difficult to identity even a *single* characteristic that would not apply to some Canadian evangelicals, including the descriptive creedal quadrilateral that David Bebbington advances as the minimalist criteria of

evangelical membership.[50]

In the past, evangelicals themselves have come together on intermittent mission projects like Billy Graham crusades. This shows little signs of abating. From 1989-1996 Don Moore was director of "Vision 2000," the EFC's task force on evangelism. During this time Moore travelled the country nurturing a vision for evangelism with church leaders, pastors and churches across the spectrum of evangelicalism. In 1994 Moore noticed a growing spirit of interdenominational cooperation and mutual support.[51] He cited Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Saskatoon as being centres where church leaders regularly meet to pray together. Driving by a Canadian Southern Baptist church in Saskatoon Moore recalls noticing a sign that said, "A Part of the Body of Christ." He believes such expressions signify a receding sectarian spirit among Canadian evangelicals.

Tellingly, when Elijah Harper wanted to stage the Sacred Assembly he did not seek assistance from a denomination but rather sought out two "parachurch" groups: World Vision Canada and the Mennonite Central Committee.[52] Parachurch organizations reflect another dimension of Canadian evangelicalism. These interdenominational groups (of which the EFC is one) can "get the job done" because their objectives tend to be more limited in scope than the those entertained by the churches. Today, the structures that set the pace of activity within evangelicalism are not the denominations but these special-purpose parachurch groups that inspire and facilitate active involvement in society.

Parachurch organizations include a legion of evangelistic organizations, mission agencies, Bible societies, publishing houses, publications and specialized ministries to every conceivable demographic niche. At present, there are more parachurch groups than there are denominations in Canada.[53] As Nathan O. Hatch and Michael S. Hamilton put it, "parachurch groups have picked the denomination's pockets . . . inventing whole new categories of religious activity to take into the marketplace, and then transmitting back into denominations an explicitly nondenominational version of evangelical Christianity."[54]

Recently, *Faith Today* featured a cover entitled "The Parachurch." The headline was accompanied by a revealing by-line that reflects the stresses and the possibilities of this phenomenon in relation to the church: "Complement Competitor Co-worker." In the

issue, one authority claimed that the sheer enormity of spiritual and physical needs that exist in Canada are drawing churches and parachurches more closely together.[55] However, in another article, "Money and Ministry," another expert explained that tensions exist between the parachurch groups and the denominations as they compete for the evangelical Christian's charitable giving dollar: "The interdenominational [parachurch] missions feel that the local church is becoming too possessive of its congregation's financial resources, [while] the denominations . . . feel that the interdenominational ministries are getting a bigger share."[56]

The parachurch ministries embody the essence of evangelicalism: "entrepreneurial, decentralized, and given to splitting, forming and reforming . . . dominated by self-appointed and independent-minded religious leaders."[57] The tangled mass of parachurch ministries add more weight to the centrifugal force that pulls evangelicals apart into yet smaller theological alliances and practical coalitions. At least one parachurch executive has doubts about his decision to leave his denomination for the special interest organization. Muses Rick Tobias, executive director of Yonge Street Mission in Toronto: "We left too early. We abandoned our denominations too easily and quickly. There were battles to be fought and won. The end result may be that we've weakened the church."[58]

Parachurch groups are not the only culprits in diffusing the energies of evangelicalism. In some measure the wide variety of denominations and parachurch groups within the evangelical movement reflect the "privatising" impulse of the culture. In modern life truth is a private affair--not something that binds the individual or group to a commitment to behave publically in accordance with that "truth." In *The Culture of Disbelief*, Stephen Carter cogently explains what this means: "The message of contemporary culture seems to be that it is perfectly alright to *believe* [in religion] . . . but you really ought to keep it to yourself."[59]

Evangelicals seem to have heard this message and acquiesced. In the spring of 1993, Rawlyk and the Angus Reid Group polled Canadians on the nature of their religious beliefs. It was the largest survey ever conducted on this issue. *Maclean's* magazine, the nation's largest news weekly, featured the survey's results in a cover story entitled *God is*

Alive: Canada is a Nation of Believers. It devoted an unprecedented 17 pages towards Christianity as expressed by Canadians.[60] In sharp relief to "the naysayers and doomsters who pervade so much of our national life,"[61] the survey revealed that 75 percent of Canadian still call themselves Christian and hold to orthodox Christian beliefs.[62] Pollster Angus Reid comments that the study indicates that "the visible Christian minority, those with a public commitment to their faith, are merely the tip of the iceberg."[63] While the survey's findings reveal a strong preference for the Christian faith, one muses why Christians and evangelicals effect so little apparent cultural influence. The fact that 75 percent of Christians and 70 percent of evangelicals agree that "my private beliefs about Christianity are more important to me that what is taught by any church" offers a clue.[64] Evangelicals have lost a vital commitment to their churches and to the authority of the theology that those churches teach.

Evangelist T.V. Thomas believes that the church is partly at fault: "In our call to personal commitment to Christ, we have made 'personal' and 'private' synonymous. As a result we have people who say, 'I have faith; I'm a private Christian.'"[65] Stiller laments: "We're trapped by an unbiblical and unproductive vision. We focus on inner spirituality, leaving much of life without a witness."[66] Perhaps Tobias' reflection on the parachurch abandonment of the denomination deserves consideration on a wider level. Arguably, evangelicals as a community have abandoned the institutional church *in their minds* if not in their attendance. This individualist impulse helps explain the high tolerance most evangelicals retain for diversity at every juncture of their religious life.

(2) Culturally Relevant

Evangelicals are more or less united in their commitment to make the gospel message relevant to non-Christians. As I have indicated, in the past twenty years, evangelicals have generally abandoned earlier definitions of "worldliness" that involve avoiding externals to become world-affirming. Contemporary evangelicalism attempts to be culturally sensitive.

This sensitivity suggests that Sunday worship be connected to the realities of the

age and to people's daily "nine-to-five" routine. As the issue themes of *Faith Today* in 1996 indicate, evangelicals are open to discussing controversial topics and attempt to relate the gospel to current concerns. In 1992, World Vision Canada combined with the Angus Reid Group to ask Canadian clergy, lay attenders and theological academics to describe the components of a "good church."[67] Eighty-four percent of those Christians surveyed still agreed with the statement that "church is not worth attending unless it provides practical guidance for expressing one's faith in the world during the week."[68] The preaching content at First Alliance Church in Calgary serves as an illustrative example. In *These Evangelical Churches of Ours* (1995), Lloyd Mackey observes: "While [the sermons] are never overtly political, they will often touch on the sanctity of life, the importance of marriage vows, and the need for integrity in business and political life. And the sermons are always based on the Bible."[69] Reginald Bibby's research suggests that "the religious groups in Canada [must] deliver with total integrity . . . a message that starts with God but also stresses the whole idea of self and society."[70] Connecting the Bible with the rest of life is a feature of the teaching in many evangelical churches.

Most Canadian evangelicals appear to agree on the need to be culturally relevant in one's mission--but not at the expense of theological integrity. One female lay leader from an evangelical Mennonite Brethren church in Alberta made this point cogently in arguing that the church must be "contemporary enough, without compromising itself in order to create an exciting option to the community around it."[71] The authors of the World Vision/Angus Reid survey and resultant book, *Where's A Good Church?* (1993), Donald Posterski and Irwin Barker, contend that cultural relevance and doctrinal integrity are necessary for a church to "carve out a present tense credibility."[72] Otherwise that church will not survive. Alister McGrath links the world-formative orientation of evangelicalism to its very mission:

> Evangelicalism . . . recognizes that Christianity exists in the midst of a plurality of religions. . . . But it sees no needs to withdraw or retreat from any of these core convictions of the Christian faith on account of these factors. Indeed, it would regard such moves as a totally improper capitulation of the Christian faith, and asks that its integrity be respected, and the cultural pressures to homogenize its beliefs and claims should be resisted.[73]

Nevertheless, resisting such homogenization continues to prove to be difficult for contemporary evangelicalism. Martin Marty believes that this "new worldliness"[74] of the world-affirming evangelicals represents the movement's "greatest threat":[75]

> Evangelicalism has moved from resentment against the world that left it out to a world of power, very often on the world's terms. Thirty years ago evangelicals were saying, 'You can tell we're true because Christ said the little flock will be faithful and nobody likes us so we're true.' Now it says, 'You can tell we're true because everybody is joining us.' I think that's a great danger.[76]

Consider again the Sacred Assembly. Although their spiritual beliefs varied drastically, the 2,000 participants in the assembly agreed on the fundamental principle that the Creator made the land for the people to live in, and that the Creator desires for people to share the land with each other and take responsibility for its care.[77] This affirmation is not an explicitly Christian statement. Nonetheless neither is it an abrogation of the Genesis accounts of creation. Therefore, in light of a higher issue at stake--an opportunity for further evangelism towards all parties represented at the assembly and indeed toward the larger, pluralistic Canadian community--evangelicals signed this declaration. Rooting the irenic nature of evangelicalism in the wisdom of the cross, participant Brian Stiller speaks for many evangelicals when he addresses the question in a recent essay, "Canadian Pluralism: Friend or Foe?":

> [Living as a Christian] in today's pluralism calls for finding opportunities to affirm the dignity and worth of others, even though their views may be in opposition to one's own. . . . The centre of our work is Jesus Christ who made himself of no reputation but became obedient . . . to . . . the humiliating . . . cross. The spirit that needs to cloak us as we work out our salvation and articulate a vision of life is not an imperial power, but the slain lamb.[78]

At the Sacred Assembly, the affirmation of the ambiguous "Creator principle" coupled with Stiller's explanation of why evangelicals will cooperate with others in view of Christ's example are illustrative of a new cultural sensitivity. In contradistinction, Canada's best known fundamentalist, T.T. Shields, once declared: "I will have no compromise with the enemy. I have declared again and again that I have resigned from the diplomatic corps; I am a soldier . . . and as God gives me strength . . . I will smite [liberalism]."[79] While most would delimit Shields from the evangelical camp, his attitude (expressed in 1923)

nevertheless typified the evangelical penchant for isolationism earlier in this century. Believers were warned to avoid contact with the "enemy," namely those who were "tainted" with theologically liberal tendencies. As the Assembly illustrates however, in recent years evangelicals have abandoned their "sectishness," joined "the diplomatic corps" and learned the discourse of cultural pluralism. Sometimes this sensitivity is consistent with the message of the gospel they proclaim, at other junctures, as in fundamentalism, it is reactionary, and at other times it is merely a capitulation to the values of secular society.

Former Ontario Theological Seminary professor of ethics, Douglas Webster, believes that this widespread accommodation to the culture poses a terminal threat to evangelicalism and argues that the disease has infected the very heart of Canadian evangelicalism--its theological institutions.

> Today's seminaries are reeling under the impact of modernity. . . . It has affected the entire seminary context, undermining faculty competence, student performance, church support, confidence in the curriculum and the spirituality of the seminary community. . . . Current studies stress the need for seminaries to become more market-sensitive, less academic. They are encouraged to become more practically oriented, less professorial. Seminaries are being urged to prepare pastors rather than train scholars. . . . Pastors, church growth consultants and the person in the pew seem to agree that today's seminary product is inferior. . . . There seems to be little concern that the criticism against seminaries is more culturally conditioned than biblically motivated. Seminaries do need to change and improve, but the spirit of the age, rather than the Holy Spirit, may be having the controlling influence in this climate of criticism. Modernity has played a significant role in . . . distracting seminaries from the real change that would bring long-range spiritual growth and vitality. Modernity's influence has shifted priority from meaning to method, from truth to technique, from principle to pragmatism.[80]

Webster's analysis poignantly exposes the "culture wars" that are raging within and beyond the seminary for the soul of Canadian evangelicalism.

Almost totally consistent with the portrait of "evangelical modernity" that Webster opposes, the president of Eastern Pentecostal Bible College in Peterborough, foresees five "key words" that describe the future for Bible colleges if they are be contextual in the next century: "integrated," "technological," "diversified," "global" and "discerning."[81] Considering that this institution prepares evangelicals for leadership, one can extrapolate that the president's "key words" offer a portrait of the kinds of Christians he hopes his

graduates will ultimately become and reproduce. However this list of adjectives is far more attuned to the *context* than it is to the *text*! Alas, Christian contextualization means little when it is wrested from its biblical and theological moorings.

At this juncture, a brief sketch of the term "modernity" is needed. In *The Malaise of Modernity* (1991), Charles Taylor defines modernity as a movement based firmly on individualism--choosing one's own life pattern.[82] No longer do individuals see themselves as part of a larger community or created order. The fruit of this is a narcissism which knows no overarching reality and acknowledges no duty but self-fulfilment. This virulent individualism relates to a second malaise: "the eclipse of ends" which reduces all choices to the demands of efficiency.[83] This instrumental approach creates an artificial environment where one is continually driven to seek the next technological "solution." A third "malaise of modernity" is that a "soft despotism" (Tocqueville) rules one's life.[84] Since there is no longer the connection to the wider community the individual is cast to the merciless forces of market consumerism and government bureaucracy, typically without ever realizing it.

To some extent, the evangelical tendencies under consideration may be viewed as mere reflections of modernity. Much evangelical diversity could be explained as the impulses of smaller groups truncated from the wider body of Christ. To reiterate a finding from the 1993 *Maclean's* poll, 70 percent of evangelicals derive their theological beliefs from sources beyond the official teachings of their church. Canadian evangelicals are highly individualistic. It is hard to imagine all evangelical constituencies ever agreeing on a specific, significant theological issue without lapsing into sectarian bickering. Taylor's identification of modern instrumentalism is also evident in Canadian evangelicalism's preoccupation with harnessing technology to the service of its goals. As I have suggested, recently there has been a growing concern with the loss of the "evangelical mind." Some authorities are warning that contemporary evangelicalism has become detached from its ancient and Reformation confessions, "while TV culture, entertainment culture, the cult of self-absorption, and various other anti-intellectualist forces cut down the small prophetic protests raised against them."[85] These "worldly evangelicals" (Quebedeaux) are ruled not

by the claims of Christ upon them but by the "soft despotism" of the market forces that prevail over the rest of the modernist kingdom.

I have noted the willingness of evangelicalism to enter into the arena of popular culture. Apologists for this accommodation argue that such appropriation is desirable as long as the tools of modernism are used critically. Indeed, David Lyon, no apologist for modernist accommodation, concedes in "Beware Cyberdolatry!":

> Let us not fall into the mere anti-technology camp either. The ancient scriptures call us to technological responsibility and to live in today's world as an influence for good--salt and light. How we approach technology, as with everything else, is a matter of faith.[86]

However given evangelicalism's weakened theological centre, faithfully approaching the tools of modernity (e.g., technology, consumerism etc.) may prove difficult to actualize. It would seem that in the absence of a vital theological confession Eastern Pentecostal Bible College's graduates and similarly oriented evangelicals are particularly vulnerable to the inexorable "onrush of economic and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and mesmerize the world with fast music, fast computers, and fast food . . . pressing nations [and their particular cultures and religions] into one commercially homogenous, global network: one McWorld."[87]

(3) Responding to Culture with the Gospel Message

Biblical spirituality is contextual because human beings are creatures of time and place. One's location shapes how one listens and responds to the Bible.[88] Evangelicals attempt to be culturally relevant because they are world-affirming and because they believe that the better one understands one's context the more effective one can be in making the gospel understood within that locality. Arnell Motz articulates this impulse in *Reclaiming a Nation: The Challenge of Re-evangelizing Canada by the Year 2000*: "The value of research for church growth and evangelism strategies should be clear. Knowing what our audience is like can help us set more strategic faith goals and give us insights to improve our communication of the gospel."[89] Demographics, market analysis and strategic plans are harnessed toward the fulfilment of the "Great Commission" given by Jesus in

Matt. 28:18-20.[90] One observer remarks that "evangelicals are about the business of growing the flock, broadening God's market share, spawning new Christians and leading them to a mature faith."[91]

Evangelicals disagree on what it means to communicate the gospel. Even as evangelicals place differing stresses upon Bebbington's ideological quadrilateral, so various quarters of evangelicalism understand the nature of mission differently. Some are primarily animated by a desire to "win souls for Christ." Wally McKay, an Aboriginal Christian who was one of the organizers of the Sacred Assembly, evaluated the gathering's value in just those terms: "Aboriginal people heard--some for the first time--the Christian message expressed in love."[92] Other groups are less sanguine. In the preface to *This Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ours*, Kenn Ward, editor of *Canadian Lutheran* magazine, attempts to relieve the reader of the idea that any members of his denomination will aggressively try to win his or her soul for Christ: "Before we go any further . . . I need to tell you that nobody is suddenly going to jump out from between these pages and ask you if you have been saved."[93]

Recently *ChristianWeek* carried a feature on the shape of evangelistic activity within evangelicalism.[94] Based on interviews with evangelists, parachurch and denominational leaders the article noted "the feeling that methods that were effective in bringing people to faith a decade ago don't work nearly as well today."[95] Disturbed by the high drop-out rates from all forms of evangelism, Wayne Kirkland argues that faith-sharing is more than wielding a tract or a video that dispenses information.[96] Kirkland is concerned that the modern techniques of evangelism have trivialized conversion into a formula. He laments: "Most everything we do has to do with methods and strategies."[97] This preoccupation "has contributed to a warped view of evangelism in the evangelical community."[98] Kirkland conducted a survey among "serious Christians" and was surprised at their dismal view of evangelism. He found that nine out of ten Christians committed to the Great Commission felt "totally inadequate and negatively toward evangelism--failure, fear and embarrassment."[99]

George Marsden characterizes American fundamentalists as "masters of modern

technique."[100] Canadian evangelicals are similarly fascinated with high technology and quick to adopt promising methods that might enhance the "effectiveness" of their evangelism--and the size of their churches.[101] As Canadians Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton have observed: "The greatest problem with a Christian cultural witness is that evangelicals are often at the forefront of those who are trying to preserve the status quo . . . [wanting] to conserve many of its central features, such as economic growth, [and] technological superiority."[102] Ironically, in Kirkland's view, it has been this very preoccupation with the promise of technology and technique in the realm of evangelization that has sidelined many evangelicals from actively and confidently sharing the gospel.[103] Instead, these high tech tools have intimidated their users into feelings of "failure, fear and embarrassment."[104]

In "Do Evangelicals Evangelize?" (1991), Brian Stiller answers his question in the negative.[105] As regards sharing their faith, he says that evangelicals "have been coasting for a long time."[106] Stiller cites a variety of reasons for this situation. External factors include the disastrous evangelical alliance with television; the cultural mood against proselytism and the apathy towards institutional religion in the culture.[107] Internal reasons include the church's failure to commend evangelical preaching and cultivate new "Billy Grahams" in churches and seminaries; the new self-orientation of evangelicalism; and, finally, that evangelicals have been acculturated, forgetting "the desperate state of people without Jesus Christ."[108] Stiller writes:

> Evangelicals have climbed the rungs of the economic ladder, as our modern churches and state-of-the-art technology attest. . . . The danger is that as we begin to think like those around us we begin to lose our distinctiveness. We focus on making people feel better, live better, raise better families, earn and save more money, get a better education--and the list goes on. Forgotten is . . . our ultimate task to . . . reach those in need of salvation.[109]

The defining evangelical tendency of the last half century has been accommodationist. I have noted this impulse at work in three critical areas of evangelical praxis: (1) a qualified tolerance for diverse participation of ecclesiastical and theological expressions under its banner, (2) a sensitivity to the needs of its context and finally, (3) a resolve to act in order to satisfy those needs with the gospel message.

Over the past two decades, evangelicalism's attempts to make the gospel relevant within the pluralist milieu are noble. However, evangelicalism itself has been changed by the encounter. Robert Wuthnow's critique of American evangelicalism also applies to the movement in Canada:

> To be sure, evangelicals are generally devout, church-going Christians who take the Bible seriously and try to live in obedience to their Lord. But study after study shows that they seldom understand the Bible very well, know little about theology, buy heavily into the therapeutic culture of feel-good-ism, and are caught up in a cycle of overspending and consumption like everyone else.[110]

In 1961, *Maclean's* journalist Ralph Allen concluded that the church's real influence upon secular Canada was "in fast decline." There is no compelling evidence that the world-affirming evangelical movement has reversed that trend. As John Stackhouse writes, "For all of the vaunted vitality attributed to evangelicalism in Canada in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is a vitality that seems privatized into a subculture with no discernible influence upon Canadian public life."[111] Paradoxically, while evangelicalism cherishes its mission impulse, its own worldliness wars against itself. The evangelical tendency to accommodate itself to the ethos of the secular culture has obstructed the movement's ability to offer a prophetic, alternative vision of life.

NOTES

1. To ensure that this focus is both contemporary and Canadian, I intend to draw liberally from two trans-denominational publications that reflect the mainstream of evangelicalism in this country, *ChristianWeek* and *Faith Today*. *ChristianWeek* is published biweekly and has a circulation of 12,000 Canada-wide. It is committed both to "historic Christianity" and to providing a forum for "news and comment about Christian faith and life in Canada." *Faith Today* has a national circulation of 21,000 and is published bimonthly by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. I have limited the scope of my research in these periodicals from January, 1993 to July, 1997.

2. A. Brian McKillop, *Matters of the Mind: The University in Ontario, 1791-1951* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 96.

3. Cognizant of the inexorable workings of the *providentia Dei*, Calvin's understanding of the Christian life is viewed through a dual perspective that is illustrated in the titles of two chapters in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, "Meditation on the Future Life" (III.ix), and "On the Right Use of the Present Life" (III.x). In these two chapters Calvin advances an Augustinian tension that unifies his thought between a faithful hope in God's invisible, victorious kingdom (*civitate Dei*), and a faithful life now in God's good creation under the curse of sin and redemption yet to be fulfilled (*civitate terrena*). See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 20, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. Ford L. Battles, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

4. Paul Tillich, *A Complete History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 265.

5. Matt. 25:10: "And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut." All biblical citations taken from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

6. John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark and Luke*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 569.

7. Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 233.

8. Roland H. Bainton, *The Medieval Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 42.

9. Troeltsch, *Christian Churches*, 2:602.

10. According to Calvin, an outward commitment to the world must be allied to an inward suspicion of the secular. His dialectic between the sacred and the secular can be detected in this excerpt from the *Geneva Catechism*:

> *S.* I believe in "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting."
> *M.* To what end is this article set down in the Confession of Faith?
> *S.* To remind us that our happiness is not situated on the earth. . . . We are to live in this world as foreigners, continually thinking of departure, and not allowing our hearts to be entangled by earthly thoughts.

John Calvin, *Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger, trans. J.K.S. Reid (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 262.

11. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 5.

12. 1 Cor. 10:33: "I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved."

13. Noll, *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 17.

14. Robert A. Wright, *A World Mission: Canadian Protestantism and the Quest for a New International Order, 1918-1939* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 9.

15. Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century*, 266.

16. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 197-98.

17. In 1972, after six years of evangelistic ministry at the *Man and his World* site, evangelical leaders in Montreal invited the lay leaders of the *Sermons from Science* outreach to assume a permanent presence in the city. The ministry was renamed "Christian Direction/*Direction Chrétienne*." Christian Direction's first executive director, Keith A. Price, worked intentionally to preserve a warm (and rare) alliance between his parachurch organization and the churches in Quebec. Under its present director, Glenn B. Smith, Christian Direction continues to provide the church in Quebec with multi-lingual support and resources oriented towards promoting Christian faith in the marketplace.

18. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951). It is noted that Niebuhr's models are somewhat arbitrary in that his model of "Christ transforming culture" presumes something of the "Christ against culture" model.

19. Matt. 5:13-16: "You are the salt of the earth. . . . You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to

your Father in heaven."

20. I am grateful to John Stackhouse for this section on the history of the EFC. He devotes a chapter to the Fellowship in *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 165-73.

21. As quoted in Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 166-67.

22. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 167.

23. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 168-69.

24. Ibid., 169.

25. As quoted in Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 168-69.

26. In May 1996, Stiller accepted an appointment as President of Ontario Theological Seminary and Ontario Bible College in Toronto. In February 1997, Gary R. Walsh, bishop of the Free Methodist Church in Canada was elected Stiller's successor as president of the EFC.

27. Doug Koop, "EFC Selects New President," *ChristianWeek*, March 4, 1997, 1.

28. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 172.

29. Calvin solemnly believed that all society and human enterprise was darkened by evil and sought to extend the light of the gospel into every sphere of Genevan life. Calvin's theology was accommodationist in that he took the real situations of life seriously--a theological orientation that involved men and women of all vocations and status, families and children. See C. Gregg Singer, "Calvin and the Social Order" in *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet*, ed. Jacob T. Hoogstra (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959), 233-34.

30. Brian C. Stiller, *Critical Options for Evangelicals* (Markham, Ont.: Faith Today Publications, 1991), 19.

31. Ibid., 20.

32. Donald C. Posterski, "Affirming the Truth of the Gospel: Anglicans in Pluralist Canada" in *Anglican Essentials, Essays Presented to Essentials 94*, (Montreal, 1994), [photocopy].

33. Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathaniel Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 20-26.

34. David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 129.

35. See Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 222-26.

36. Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962), 55-80.

37. In December, 1995, the Toronto Airport Vineyard withdrew from the Association of Vineyard Churches and became an independent church. It is now named The Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. The nightly revival meetings continue.

38. As quoted in James A. Beverley, *Holy Laughter and the Toronto Blessing: An Investigative Report* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 12.

39. For a highly negative example of an evangelical reaction to the Toronto Blessing see cult watcher Hank Hanegraaf's jeremiad in David F. Dawes, "Hanegraaf Takes on 'Renewal' Movement," *ChristianWeek*, May 13, 1997, 11.

40. Gabriel Fackre describes this group as those evangelicals who emphasize "glossolalia, healing and celebrative worship." The person and work of the Holy Spirit is a central focus. *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 23.

41. Beverley, *Toronto Blessing*, 149-60.

42. Os Guinness, "Persuasion for the New World: An Interview with Dr. Os Guinness," *Crucible* 4/2 (1992): 15; quoted in Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 23.

43. John G. Stackhouse, Jr., "'Who Whom?': Evangelicalism in Canadian Society" in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) 68-9.

44. Debra Fieguth, "Sacred Assembly Addresses Plea for a Spiritual Solution," *ChristianWeek*, January 2, 1996, 1.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., italics mine.

48. Ibid.

49. John G. Stackhouse, Jr., "What's in a Name? Christian Denominations in Canada," *Faith Today*, January February, 1994, 18.

50. Noll, *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 7.

51. Harold Jantz, "Catching the Heartbeat of the Country," *ChristianWeek*, January 4, 1994, 5.

52. Fieguth, "Sacred Assembly," *ChristianWeek*, January 2, 1996, 1.

53. Bramwell Ryan, "The Parachurch: Complement, Competitor, Co-worker," *Faith Today*, November December, 1996, 23.

54. Nathan O. Hatch and Michael S. Hamilton, "Can Evangelicalism Survive Its Success?" *Christianity Today*, October 5, 1992, 22-3.

55. Ryan, "The Parachurch," *Faith Today*, November December, 1996, 26.

56. Debra Fieguth, "Money and Ministry," *Faith Today*, November December, 1996, 29.

57. Hatch and Hamilton, "Evangelicalism," *Christianity Today*, October 5, 1992, 28.

58. Ryan, "The Parachurch," *Faith Today*, November December, 1996, 26.

59. Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 25.

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61. Robert Lewis, "Elites on the Outside," *Maclean's*, April, 12, 1993, 2.

62. Ibid.

63. As quoted in Alan Swift, "A Nation of Private Christians?" *Faith Today*, July August, 1993, 21.

64. Andrew S. Grenville, "The Awakened and the Spirit-Moved: The Religious Experiences of Canadian Evangelicals in the 1990s" in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 430.

65. Swift, "Private Christians," *Faith Today*, July August, 1993, 28.

66. Brian Stiller, "A Nation of Private Christians," *Faith Today*, November December, 1993, 70.

67. See Donald C. Posterski and Irwin Barker, *Where's A Good Church?* (Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books, 1993).

68. Posterski and Barker, *Good Church*, 38.

69. Lloyd Mackey, *These Evangelical Churches of Ours* (Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books, 1995), 27.

70. Debra Fieguth, "Bibby Paints Bleak Picture of Church-Society Relationship," *ChristianWeek*, October 5, 1993, 2.

71. Posterski and Barker, *Good Church*, 38.

72. Ibid., 216-17.

73. Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 240.

74. Martin Marty, "Marty on Canada's Evangelicals," interview by Harold Jantz, *ChristianWeek*, November 21, 1989, 6.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Fieguth, "Sacred Assembly," *ChristianWeek*, January 2, 1996, 1.

78. Brian C. Stiller, "Canadian Pluralism: Friend or Foe?" in *Studies in Canadian Evangelical Renewal. Essays in Honour of Ian S. Rennie* (Markham, Ont.: Faith Today Publications, 1996), 118.

79. As quoted in Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 23.

80. Douglas Webster, "Seminary Education: Beyond Method," in *Studies in Canadian Evangelical Renewal. Essays in Honour of Ian S. Rennie* (Markham, Ont.: Faith Today Publications, 1996), 4-5.

81. Carl Verge, "Key Words in 21st Century Theological Education," *ChristianWeek*, October 5, 1993, 8-9.

82. Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ont.: House of Anansi Press, 1991), 2-4.

83. Ibid., 4-8.

84. Ibid., 8-12.

85. Mark A. Noll, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. and David F. Wells, "Evangelical Theology Today" in *Theology Today* 51/4 (1995): 502. See Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). For a Canadian endorsement of Noll's book and a comment upon the state of the "evangelical mind" in Canada, see John G. Stackhouse, Jr., "Another Revival We Need," *ChristianWeek*, November 14, 1995, 8.

86. David Lyon, "Beware Cyberdolatry!" *ChristianWeek*, August 23, 1994, 11.

87. Benjamin R. Barber, "Jihad vs. McWorld," *Atlantic*, March, 1992, 53.

88. Glenn Smith, "Doing Theology in the Canadian Urban Context: Some Methodological Considerations" in *Studies in Canadian Evangelical Renewal. Essays in Honour of Ian S. Rennie* (Markham, Ont.: Faith Today Publications, 1996), 98.

89. Arnell Motz, "Research for the Local Church" in *Reclaiming a Nation, The Challenge of Re-evangelizing Canada by the Year 2000*, ed. Arnell Motz (Richmond, B.C.: Outreach Canada, 1990), 189.

90. Matt. 28: 18-20: "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

91. Charles Trueheart, "Welcome to the Next Church," *Atlantic*, August, 1996, 58.

92. As quoted in Fieguth, "Sacred Assembly," *ChristianWeek*, January 2, 1996, 4.

93. As quoted in Lloyd Mackey, *These Evangelical Churches of Ours* (Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books, 1995), 63.

94. See Doug Koop, "Striding Away from the Shadow of the Steeple," *ChristianWeek*, February 7, 1997, 8-9.

95. Ibid., 8.

96. Ibid.

97. Wayne Kirkland as quoted in ibid., 8.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 119.

101. For example, the promising results of new methods and means is a ubiquitous theme throughout the features and advertisements of *ChristianWeek* and *Faith Today*.

102. Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping A Christian World View* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 150.

103. Koop, "Striding Away," *ChristianWeek*, February 7, 1997, 8.

104. Kirkland as quoted in ibid.

105. Stiller, *Critical Options*, 30-32.

106. Ibid., 30.

107. Ibid., 31.

108. Ibid, 31-32.

109. Ibid., 32.

110. Robert Wuthnow, review of *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, by Mark A. Noll, In *First Things*, May 1994, 41.

111. Stackhouse, "'Who Whom,'" in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) 67.

CHAPTER THREE
LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

As was demonstrated in chapter one, the evangelical church has its antecedents in the Reformation movement Martin Luther helped precipitate. He formulated the theology of the cross in theoretical and practical terms over against the medieval institutional church. The *theologia crucis* contrasts the liberating gospel of the crucified Christ with the self-glorification derived from human achievement constitutive of the theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*). Inasmuch as elements of *concupiscentia* (Luther's word for religious self-centeredness)[1] appear whenever humans worship, the theology of the cross can serve as a critical theology to apprise the devout of their ill-founded attempts to please God by their acts of worship and service. Jürgen Moltmann writes in *The Crucified God*:

> The knowledge of the cross brings a conflict of interest between God who has become man and man who wishes to become God. . . . Just as Paul contrasted the wisdom of this world and the folly of the cross, and in parallel with this, contrasted righteousness by the works of the law and the scandal of the cross, so Luther brought together the religious way of knowledge through the contemplation of the works of God, and the moral way of self-affirmation through one's own works and directed the *theologia crucis* polemically against both.[2]

Hence, this theology provides a powerful lens through which to examine critically the nature and tendencies of any Christian enterprise. In this thesis, I focus the lens of Luther's cruciform theology upon Canadian contemporary evangelicalism.

The Theological Context of Luther

Before Luther's theology of the cross can be explicated, some important observations that pertain to his theological context must be noted. Martin Luther (1483-1546) lived in a restive epoch. By the early sixteenth century, the need for reform

and renewal within the Christian church was indubitable.[3] Although to the devout the church remained the visible expression of Christ on earth, increasingly the church appeared to be a vast judicial, financial, administrative and diplomatic machine lacking the executive powers to enforce its lofty claims. The clergy were "neither firmly located, indoctrinated, nor disciplined."[4] The spirituality of the medieval church was at a low ebb. Joseph Lortz concedes that "to a significant degree the Renaissance curia presents an acute secularization, which primitive and early Christendom would have called anti-Christian."[5] The decline of the medieval church's authority only fanned "an immense appetite for the divine."[6] Piety ran unchecked by the church resulting in a fitful spirituality in which most found little succour from their relationship to God. Timothy George writes:

> The Late Middle Ages . . . was alive with all sorts of spiritual vitalities. . . . The thirst for God was sometimes reflected in bizarre patterns of spirituality: braying at Mass in honour of the donkey which Mary rode, the name of Jesus tattooed over the heart, veneration of bleeding Hosts. More often it followed the beaten paths of mainline piety. But, in either case, it was for many people a deeply unsatisfying spirituality.[7]

Paul Tillich describes the Late Middle Ages as an "age of anxiety" due to "the dissolution of the protective unity of the religiously guided medieval culture."[8]

At the heart of the malaise was a theological crisis. Exacerbated by a largely uneducated clergy, there was considerable "doctrinal confusion" (Gilson) and a misapprehension of the notion of justification in particular.[9] The teaching of justification is primarily concerned with how the saving action of God towards humanity through Jesus Christ may be appropriated by the individual. "*Wie kriege ich einen gnädigen Gott?*" (How can I find a gracious God?) Luther demanded of the church.[10] Luther's query underlies a central theme in Christian thought that had been buried in the Middle Ages[11] and helps explain the period's "nervous moralism and ceaseless attempts to placate a high and angry God [that] served to intensify primal anxieties of death, guilt, and loss of meaning."[12] High scholasticism, for all its achievements, had run its course and had left a confusing plurality of weakened doctrinal forms in its wake.

Scholasticism was a medieval movement that flourished between 1200 and 1500. It emphasized the rational justification of religious beliefs and the systematic presentation

of those ideas.[13] In the late twelfth century Aristotle's thought was rediscovered and through such influential writers as Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) and Duns Scotus (1270-1308). Aristotelian ideas became established as the acceptable means of arranging and developing (predominantly Augustinian) Christian theology.

Luther's personal example illustrates how scholasticism failed to provide its restive age with the comfort of God's acceptance through the saving work of Christ. Taking the medieval religious system at its word, Luther entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt in 1505 to gain the assurance of God's love through the performance of the prescribed works of penance. However instead of giving him that solace, his penitential disciplines only intensified his sense of unworthiness. Recalls Luther: "I was very pious in the monastery yet I was sad because I thought God was not gracious to me."[14] Thus when the tortured Luther sought respite from his *Anfechtungen*,[15] he found pardon unattainable in the answers of the church's scholastic framework.

Following the direction of his confessor, Johann von Staupitz, Luther resolved his *Anfechtungen* by forsaking all efforts at human piety and clinging to the crucified Christ.[16] It was during Luther's 1515-16 lectures on Romans that he made the decisive discovery of justification by faith. His theological breakthrough was that a sinner could, nevertheless, be justified by grace alone: *ergo sola gratia justificat*. This divine grace could be obtained by faith, *sola fide*, trusting only in the Word of Christ. For Luther, faith is no longer seen as chiefly obedience, it is a *fides* (trust) in the reality of God's love. God is just because he can be trusted to remain true to his word revealed in the Scriptures. Luther's gospel can be summarized in the doctrine of justification--that by faith, sinful humanity can enter into a gracious relationship with God through the efficacious sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1517), Luther accounts for his break with scholasticism: "What others learned from scholastic theology is their own affair. As for me, I know and confess that I learned there nothing but ignorance of sin, righteousness, baptism, and of the whole Christian life. . . . I lost Christ there, but now I found him again in Paul."[17] Indeed, Luther's exegetical insights on justification by faith reached all the way back to the prophets, through Paul and Augustine to stand him in "the continuity of the

faithful for all generations."[18]

The *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518 represents Luther's a summary of justification by faith cast in a concrete and concise treatise that counters the high scholastic (*via moderna*)[19] understanding of justification by human merit. The disputation is also the culmination of the Reformer's reflections upon the theology of the cross.

The Theology of the Cross

Martin Luther found the scriptural warrant for his reflections upon the cross in Paul's epistles.[20] In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul offers the central message of the gospel, articulating at the same time why the church of Christ is persecuted: "We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1:23). This passage was a shaping factor in the exegetical work of his first series of Psalm lectures (1513), and was increasingly referenced until the verse's content received its most explicit treatment in the *Heidelberg Disputation*.[21] As Luther stated to his students shortly before leaving for a disputation in Leipzig in 1519: *Crux Christi unica est eruditio verborum dei, theologia sincerissima* ("only through the cross of Christ is God's Word revealed; the cross constitutes the only genuine theology.")[22]

The *Heidelberg Disputation* (April 26, 1518) was a regular theological conference of the chapter of Augustinian monks. In anticipation of the event, Luther's confessor, Staupitz, encouraged the young monk to avoid attacking the system of indulgences. Luther had already criticized this practice in the *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* (so-called *Ninety-five Theses*) in 1517. Staupitz enjoined Luther to present a wider vision of the evangelical faith.[23] In accord with this appeal, the subject of Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* was not indulgences, but more broadly, his views concerning law, righteousness and the cross by means of an exegesis of Psalm 22. James Atkinson describes this disputation as containing "all the essentials of Luther's mighty evangelical theology."[24] In his introduction to the disputation, Luther calls his dialectical theses paradoxes which he had acquired from Paul and from Paul's "trustworthy interpreter," Augustine (354-430). The document's twenty-eight resolutions are directed against the

scholastic teaching on salvation and, in Gordon Rupp's view, sum up "the whole movement by which a man is brought to awareness of his sin, to the accusation of himself, to acceptance of the divine judgement, to humility, and so to the abandonment of his own righteousness, and to embrace the mercy of God."[25]

The first two theses reiterate the centrality of justification by faith in Luther's gospel by eschewing the saving value of works in the face of God's perfect righteousness.[26] Theses 3 to 11 are Luther's attack on human reason charging that the sinner concedes any claim to justification on the basis of his or her self-righteousness. "Although the works of man always seem attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins" (thesis 3).[27] Every kind of personal preparation for grace by the orientation of the will is dismissed. The theology of the cross rejects the Bielian *faciendo quod in se est* ("to do one's very best") but calls the Christian to a life of discipleship under the cross of Christ. Until a person comes "to utterly despair of his own ability," and by faith realizes God's *opus alienum* ("alien work") designed to lead to the grace of Christ, he cannot find any solace in life (thesis 11).[28]

Luther dismisses all the distinctions humans construct to evade this sense of inadequacy such as "free will after the fall," "mortal and venial sin," "doing what is in him" etc. in theses 12 to 18.[29] Justification is foreign to humanity, and it is conferred *coram Deo* ("before God") by faith in Christ. The doctrine of justification by faith and the theology of the cross are related in that the cross and the resurrection of Christ provide the original pattern of justification: "in justification is realized conformity with Christ--the process of being fashioned in the image of Christ."[30]

Having disavowed all pretence of human self-justification apart from faith in the incarnate Christ before God, Luther turns to humanity's knowledge of God. Consistent with Luther's quest to discover a gracious God, the emphasis in Luther's theology is a knowledge of God that is soteriological: "In Christ crucified is the true theology and the knowledge of God. . . . As long as man does not know Christ, he does not know God as hidden in sufferings. Such a man prefers works to sufferings, and glory to a cross."[31] Theses 19 to 21 form the core of Luther's theology of the cross and, in fact, point to a

theology of revelation grounded in *solus Christus* ("Christ alone"):

> 19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God [*invisibilia Dei*] as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1:20].[32]
>
> 20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible [*visibilia*] and manifest [*posteriora*] things of God seen through suffering and the cross.[33]
>
> 21. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.[34]

These statements comprise a "hermeneutic of suspicion" (Ricoeur) which Luther employed in his critique of late medieval scholastic theology and practice.

When Luther condemns the theology of glory, he indicts the kind of natural theology practised by Aquinas and the scholastics--the attempt to reach God from earthly observations.[35] To the theologian of glory God is not hidden. He is perceived to be omnipresent. The knowledge of God can thus be derived from nature, history and theological speculation. As John Baillie explains, what Luther has in mind when he speaks of the theology of glory is not the knowledge appropriate to believers in their state of glory before God, but "the knowledge of God in *his* naked glory and majesty."[36] On the other hand, the theologian of the cross limits the search of God to the incarnate, crucified Christ. Luther states:

> For to this end he came down, was born, was conversant among men, suffered, was crucified and died, that by all means he might set forth himself plainly before our eyes, and fasten the eyes of our hearts upon himself that he might thereby keep us from climbing up into heaven, and from the curious searching of the divine majesty.[37]

The "theologian of the cross" gains a knowledge of God only through suffering and the cross, the significance of which becomes clear as he or she stands under the cross of Christ. In the event of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Luther is convinced that something is revealed, something beyond human domestication. In this regard, George S. Hendry contends that "our knowledge of God is entirely mediate, and we must hold fast to the media which he has given us. This is the *theologia crucis* which Luther opposes to the *theologia gloriae* of the scholastics and all who presume to seek an immediate

knowledge of God."[38] The theology of the cross rejects a religion that is derived from anyone or anything apart from God's revelation in Christ. The cross event denies direct knowledge of God and requires that all thinking and activity come to a halt in the face of it. For Luther, the saving knowledge of God is located in God's self-revelation through Christ and his cross. In thesis 19, Luther refers to Rom. 1:20 and argues that he who tries to glimpse the invisible reality of God by observing his power, wisdom, righteousness and divinity through insight into what can be seen in the creation, does not deserve to be called a theologian.[39] Walther von Loewenich states: "Affirming the omnipresence and omnipotence of God is very pointedly described as characteristic of the theology of glory."[40]

Understanding the invisible God is only possible with *fides*. God is hidden and accordingly the revelation provided is indirect, or mediated, requiring "trusting faith." As Luther explains in thesis 20,

> Because men misused the knowledge of God through works, God wished again to be recognized in suffering, and to condemn wisdom concerning invisible things by means of wisdom concerning visible things, so that those who did honour God as manifested in his works should honour him as he is hidden in his suffering. . . . Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross . . . as Isa. [45:15] says, 'Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself.'[41]

God can be known not on the basis of his resplendent works in creation but only through the prism of faith, i.e., in the cross and sufferings of Christ. Luther sees the "hidden God" (*Deus absconditus*) as the God revealed in the passion but he is recognizable only by way of revelation. Revelation defies all attempts of reason to master it. Loewenich writes: "The precondition for . . . understanding is revelation. Therefore understanding is attained neither by those who cling to the world of external senses nor by those who rely on their own mental ability. This understanding is precisely the understanding of faith."[42] So as to deny any "point of contact" on the part of humanity, Luther argues that this revelatory encounter is only the result of God's gracious initiative:

> When I am told that God became man, I can follow the idea, but I just do not understand what it means. For what man if left to his natural promptings, if he were God, would humble himself . . . to hang on a cross? This is the ineffable and

> infinite mercy of God which the slender capacity of man's heart cannot comprehend.[43]

With the expression "the manifest things of God" in thesis 20, Luther alludes to Ex. 33:23, where Moses was not permitted to see the face of God but was allowed to look at him from behind.[44] The "backside of God" is his humanity, weakness and foolishness that Luther corresponds to Paul's comparison of God's foolishness and weakness to humanity's wisdom and strength in 1 Cor. 1:25.[45] Like Moses, the Christian can only glimpse God from the rear. True spirituality is thus a humble enterprise, prayerfully predicated upon the *visibilia* and the *posteriora* of God (thesis 20) or what Baillie describes as the "mediated immediacy of God."[46] In Christ God reveals himself to humanity directly, but in a paradoxical way. The "visible things of God" to which Luther is referring are his human nature, weakness, foolishness, and so on.[47] In the very things that one would imagine to be the qualities *not* associated with the divine, God has made himself visible "in the humility and shame of the cross."[48] In his *Commentary on Galatians*, Luther writes: "'No man,' saith the Lord, 'shall see me and live.' . . . But true Christian divinity . . . setteth not God forth unto us in his majesty. . . . It commandeth us not to search out the nature of God; but to know his will set out to us in Christ."[49] Luther imagines a new concept of God. "Who is this God who deals thus with man? Luther's answer . . . can be summarized in one of his most daring phrases: the God who deals with sinful man is none other than the 'crucified and hidden God' (*Deus crucifus et absconditus*)--the God of the *theologia crucis.*"[50]

Luther ranks good works and God's works of creation equally. In so doing Luther rejects not only the way of works but also the way of knowledge.[51] Loewenich states that by resisting the theology of glory, Luther "laid bare the common root of moralism and rationalism. . . . Religious speculations and holiness by works are two consequences of a single human desire--the desire for an unbroken and direct communion with God."[52]

Paradoxically then, the "wisdom which sees only the invisible things of God in works . . . is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened" (thesis 22)[53] because it seduces humanity to draw nearer to God on the basis of good works. "It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by

suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's" (thesis 21).[54] Such wisdom God rejects in favour of the "wisdom of visible things" (thesis 20).[55]

The *Deus revelatus* ("revealed God") is the *Deus absconditus*. Luther argues that Christians who would truly know this God must accordingly meet him not at the summit of his glorious creation but in the dark shadow of his cross, "so that those who did not honour God as manifested in his works should honour him as he is hidden in his suffering" (thesis 21).[56] Once again revelation addresses itself to faith. As Luther explains, "Man hides his own things in order to deny them, God hides his own things in order to reveal them. . . . By his concealment he does nothing else than remove that which obstructs revelation, namely, pride."[57] Indeed, the theology of the cross confesses with Paul that God chooses the foolish and the weak things of the world to confound the wise and the mighty (1 Cor. 1:27). To illustrate, Luther alludes to the exchange of Philip and Jesus in John 14: "When Philip spoke according to the theology of glory: 'Show us the Father,' Christ forthwith set aside this flighty thought about seeing God everywhere and led him to himself, saying, 'Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father.' . . . For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ."[58] In the Jesus of the passion, God becomes visible, thus pointing, paradoxically, to the place of God's hiddenness *sub contraria* ("beneath the contrary image"). The hidden God can be known only in and through the suffering and cross of Christ, the incarnate and crucified God. On the other hand, the theologian of glory "prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, [and] wisdom to folly . . . [he] hates the cross and suffering and loves works and the glory of works" (thesis 21).[59] "If the glory had been directly visible," Kierkegaard reasons, "so that everybody as a matter of course could see it, then it is false that Christ humbled Himself and took the form of a servant . . . for how in the world could anybody be offended by glory attired in glory?"[60] The theologian of glory cannot construe God to be truly present in the cross of Christ as his God is marked by glory, majesty and power. The derelict cross is thus rejected as a self-revelation of God.

In thesis 21 Luther labels this theologian with Paul's epithet, an "enemy of the

cross," who will not accept reality as it is.[61] In contradistinction, the theologian of the cross must hold to a radical commitment to reality in all instances. As Luther trenchantly asserts in thesis 21: "A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."[62] The theology of the cross is an orientation towards truth (*Wahrheitsorientierung*) that begins with a declaration that it is God incarnate who suffers death on a cross for the sake of humanity's salvation. Theology must "let God be God" (*divinitatem non nudam reliquerunt*) and be concerned with God as he has determined to reveal himself, not with some preconceived anthropocentric notion of how God *ought* to show himself.[63] The wisdom of the cross is the "divine *modus operandi*" (Hall) that stands all preconceptions of God's "glorious" way of working in the world on their head.[64]

Luther was not a "mystic" as the term was understood in his time.[65] On account of the crucified Christ he believed to live in and through Christians, Luther set his sights on a different goal than that of monastic mysticism. Instead of "sweetness" Luther sought "the fellowship of his sufferings." The theology of the cross sought a union not with the "heavenly conqueror" but with the suffering Christ. Luther's point is that Christian spirituality must ever be predicated upon humble faith revealed by the hidden and crucified God of Scripture rather than upon an *ersatz*, "direct" knowledge of God "in his naked glory and majesty."

Luther's renunciation of the scholastic project cleared the way for a new relationship with God--one based on what God has chosen to reveal of himself starting at the cross. As this mediated knowledge of God clears the way for a new theological understanding of God, it also clarifies the cruciform identity of the Christian church.

NOTES

1. During his painful journey of introspection in the Erfurt monastery (1505-11), Luther realized that self-centeredness is the motivating drive of the human being which he termed *concupiscentia*. While the term was a common appellation for sensual lust, Luther widened the sense of this term by equating it with egocentricity, a disease that is rampant within the religious dimension. *Concupiscentia* manifests itself in human beings when one seeks to justify oneself through the performance of religious duties and thus attempt to make themselves into God through acts of self-justification. Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 66.

2. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 71.

3. See Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 7-26.

4. Steven E. Ozment, "Introduction," in *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*, ed. Steven E. Ozment (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 7.

5. As quoted in Ozment, *Medieval Perspective*, 6.

6. See Lucien Fabvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation: A Badly-Put Question?" in *A New Kind of History*, ed. Peter Burke (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

7. Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989), 30-31.

8. Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Company Limited, 1952), 66.

9. McGrath, *Theology of the Cross*, 8.

10. As quoted in Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 94.

11. Hans Küng in his book, *Justification* (275-84) argues that the Pauline theology of justification existed as official doctrine of the Roman church. He cites Aquinas who asserts that humanity is justified through God's grace alone. He does no work, only believes: "In this that he believes in God who justifies, he submits to his justification and

thus receives its effect." *Justification*, 252. Unfortunately by Luther's era, this teaching had become divorced from the life of the church and was not popularly understood to be Catholic teaching. *Justification*, 281.

As Karl Barth's introductory letter in the book suggests, Küng's thesis is a debatable one. Nevertheless, whether the Reformers rediscovered or merely re-popularized justification by faith and the primacy of the Bible in doctrine, history attests to the exceeding determination and courage of the Reformers in the face of dogged Catholic resistance.

12. George, *Reformers*, 30-31.

13. See McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 66-87.

14. As quoted in Walther von Loewenich, *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*, trans. L.W. Denef (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 73.

15. As a young monk Luther found himself repeatedly terrified in the face of his finitude before a holy, unapproachable God. He called this profound sense of unworthiness *Anfechtung*. Bainton describes Luther's struggle:

> Creatureliness and imperfection alike oppressed him. Toward God he was at once attracted and repelled. Only in harmony with the Ultimate could he find peace . . . . Before God the high and God the holy Luther was stupefied. . . . *Anfechtung* . . . may be a trial sent by God to test man or an assault by the Devil to destroy man. It is all the doubt, turmoil, pang, terror, panic despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of man.

Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Mentor), 31.

16. For example, Staupitz typically counselled the young Luther, "One must keep one's eyes fixed on that man who is called Christ." As quoted in Ngien, *Suffering of God*, 39.

17. As quoted in Wilhelm Pauck, *Luther: Lectures in Romans* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), xxxix.

18. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Obedient Rebels: Catholic Substance and Protestant Principle in Luther's Reformation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 18.

19. The *via moderna* was a theological position on grace developed by Late Medieval nominalist theologian Gabriel Biel (ca. 1410-1495). He held that by *facere quod in se est* it is possible to earn *meritum denominations congruo* (by doing one's best, one merits the infusion of grace) as a fitting reward. Although Biel acknowledges the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, his work is completed by humanity's *obedientia activa* (active obedience). George, *Reformers*, 66.

20. See Charles B. Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 52-87.

21. There are a number of compelling studies that support the contention that Luther's *theologia crucis* became the signature of Luther's theological project. Lienhard believes that in the *Heidelberg Disputation* we find the theology of the cross "raised to the level of a theological program." Marc Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ. Stages and Themes of the Reformer's Theology*, trans. Edwin H. Robinson, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 98. See also Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, trans. H.J.A. Bouman, Eng. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976). Other theologians, however, contend that the cross was a stage in his theological pilgrimage. For example, McGrath argues that by 1525 Luther has abandoned the theology of the cross at least as an *organizing principle* of his theology. McGrath, *Theology of the Cross*, 166-67.

22. As quoted and translated in Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther, Man Between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwartzbart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 248.

23. Ngien, *Suffering of God*, 43.

24. James Atkinson, *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 158.

25. Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1957), 217-18.

26. *LW* 31, 42-43. Regin Prenter situates Luther's *theologia crucis* within the encompassing doctrine of justification: "The theology of the cross . . . destroys all my self-righteousness so that I am judged solely in light of Christ's action on my behalf, through him alone I am made righteous before God, is identical with the main Lutheran doctrine of justification of sinners through faith alone." Prenter, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 4.

27. *LW* 31, 39.

28. Ibid., 48.

29. Ibid., 48-52.

30. McGrath, *Theology of the Cross*, 122.

31. As quoted in Atkinson, *Martin Luther*, 159. See *LW* 31, 53.

32. *LW* 31, 52.

33. Ibid., 52.

34. Ibid., 53.

35. John Baillie helpfully distinguishes Aquinas from Luther on this matter: "The Thomist view is that we reach the knowledge of God through the knowledge of things other than God. The Lutheran view is rather that God reveals himself to us directly, but in a veiled form." *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 194.

36. Ibid., 194.

37. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, Church.1, v. 3. English translation, 1575 as quoted in Baillie, *Knowledge of God*, 191-92.

38. George S. Hendry, *God the Creator: The Hastie Lectures in the University of Glasgow, 1935* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1938), 93.

39. Rom. 1:20: "Ever since creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse."

40. Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 30.

41. *LW*, 31, 52-53.

42. Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 62.

43. As quoted in Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 173.

44. Ex. 33:23: "Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

45. 1 Cor. 1:25: "For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."

46. Baillie, *Knowledge of God*, 178-98.

47. *LW*, 31, 52.

48. Ibid., 53.

49. As quoted in Baillie, *Knowledge of God*, 189.

50. Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 116.

51. Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 20.

52. Ibid., 20.

53. Ibid., 40-41.

54. Ibid., 53.

55. Ibid., 52.

56. *LW*, 31, 53.

57. Ibid., 30.

58. *LW*, 31, 53.

59. *LW*, 31, 53.

60. As quoted in Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness*, 128.

61. *LW* 31, 53.

62. *LW* 31, 40.

63. In this way, Luther anticipated and answered Feuerbach's future critique of religion.

64. Douglas J. Hall, *God and Human Suffering* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 104.

65. For discussion on Luther and his standing as a mystic, see Heiko A. Oberman, *The Reformation, Roots and Ramifications*, trans. Andrew Gow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 88ff. Also see Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark Ltd., 1986), 126.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN EVANGELICALISM IN LIGHT OF LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

In Canada, as in the Western world, there are some contemporary similarities to the time of Luther. Walter Truett Anderson claims that we are awash today in a sea of symbols and an ocean of words with no objective criteria to guide or shape our choices.[1] The assumptions of the Enlightenment and modernity that have dominated Western thought since the eighteenth century are sinking into the ocean like a grand ship of state; the people on its listing decks are scurrying to "capture moments of meaning from a constant pattern of flux."[2] The times of upheaval parallel Luther's age.

Similar to the anemic religion of the late medieval church, modern Western Christianity is widely viewed as incapable of offering a response to the issues of the age. Popular commentator Robert Bly speaks for many when he dismisses Christianity as a "religion [that] is no longer vigorous."[3] Indeed, contemporary Christianity is rife with doctrinal confusions, hamstrung by its own plurality of theological nuances and religious forms. Meanwhile, a great hunger for spirituality persists. Harvey Cox addresses the dynamic of this unmet religious yearning:

> As the first days of the new millennium draw closer, the prospects for the human spirit seem both promising and chilling. For the past three centuries, two principal contenders--scientific modernity and traditional religion--have clashed over the privilege of being the ultimate source of meaning and value. Now, like tired boxers who slugged away too long, the two have reached an exhausted stalemate. . . . People are still willing to rely on science for the limited things that it can do, but they no longer believe it will answer their deepest questions. They remain vaguely intrigued with the traditional religions but not with conventional churches. . . . Increasing numbers of people appear ready to move on, and are on the lookout for a more promising map of the life-world.[4]

George Rawlyk's studies indicate that self-described "evangelicals" make up 16

percent of the adult population in Canada.[5] They are ardent church goers and espouse the four commitments to conversionism, biblicism, activism and crucicentrism that were discussed in chapter one. Moreover, many of their leaders are trying to position their church or parachurch group to market their brand of Christian faith to this large flock of disaffected seekers that Cox describes.

In fact, Rawlyk believes that evangelicals, long overlooked by the cultural elites, pose a vital challenge to those observers who have mistakenly projected for decades that Christianity was a spent force. Rawlyk writes:

> Any planned funeral for Canadian Christianity or for Canadian evangelicalism is premature. In fact, the evidence suggests that Canadian Protestantism is beginning to look more and more like American Protestantism, and Canadian Catholicism, though largely secularized, is becoming more Protestant and even more evangelical in its style and emphasis. This indeed is something of a religious earthquake.[6]

American Episcopalian lay person, Charles Trueheart, has felt the shudder of this religious earthquake first-hand. In his anecdotal, journal of personal encounters with the evangelical "mega-churches" in the United States, he makes some provocative observations about the evangelical enterprise and his own mainline denomination:

> Centuries of European tradition and Christian habit are deliberately being abandoned, clearing the way for new, contemporary forms of worship and belonging. . . . Evangelicals are about the business of growing the flock, broadening God's market share, spawning new Christians and leading them to mature faith and a life of service. . . . For old-church people like me, the church provides safety from those who believe other than we do, and safety from pressure to act our supposed convictions and faith by seeking out others to share them. A gated community in other words. . . . But might we be missing something--something as important as giving as good as we're getting? . . . I attend a beautiful, traditional old stone church with the finest organ, choir, and music director in my city. I look to few things as warmly as singing great lungfuls of old hymns on Sunday morning and kneeling for that transcendent moment of grace at the communion rail. But I also wonder whether . . . we're speaking a foreign language to young people, and whether my church is not in danger of withering away. And whether it doesn't deserve that fate if it doesn't get intentional, and soon.[7]

Rawlyk and Cox arrive at a similar conclusion: there is a contemporary religious yearning that is stirring individuals like Trueheart to reassess their spirituality. Moreover, the more religiously-deregulated, individual-oriented forms of evangelicalism offer a "map

of the life-world" that may present Christianity's best hope of surviving into the next millennium.[8] Nevertheless, as has been noted, the evangelical desire to be God's "salt and light" in society is blunted by the movement's overly private religiosity and its easy accommodation to the assumptions of modern culture; a culture which in the view of Cox and others, is itself quite possibly moribund. The strengths of evangelical churches--their tolerance for theological diversity, their desire to be relevant and their efforts to respond to the culture with a contextualized message of the gospel--are paradoxically the movement's great areas of weakness.

At this juncture a brief recapitulation of Luther's context and theological sympathies is timely. In the Luther's day, the *Angst* of popular feeling ultimately possessed a theological component. In the Late Middle Ages scholastic theology was at root, conditioned by an ominous view of God. Having drifted from the insights of Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Thomas Aquinas, scholasticism had become preoccupied with God's will rather than his being. William of Ockham (d. 1347) denied the real existence of universal concepts and stressed instead their character as logical constructions.[9] Stephen E. Ozment argues that Ockham's *via moderna* had all but supplanted the *via antiqua* issued by Aquinas. The result was that God's character was now suspect: "Ockham created the conditions for a new spiritual anxiety . . . that God, in a word, might be a liar."[10] Luther's "recovery of the gospel" (Oberman) was to proclaim that in Jesus Christ, God has graciously given himself, utterly and without reserve for humanity. He is thus worthy of faith. Moreover, God can only be encountered solely on the basis of what he has chosen to reveal to humanity. Luther's theology of the cross was an appeal to encounter God anew at the cross. It was a determination to meet God at Calvary by faith--at a place where one's theological insights were surrendered--so that God could be encountered in his mercy and grace witnessed by the Word of God.

Like the "evangelicals" who followed Luther in Northern Europe, he can be situated within the aegis of Bebbington's definition of an evangelical. As a young monk Luther experienced a *conversion* that engaged the totality of his being.[11] Luther was also *biblicistic*. What provided Luther's gospel of justification by grace through faith with such

theological fortitude was that he anchored his gospel in the authority of the Bible. As Luther contends, "the true Christian pilgrimage is not to Rome, or Compostela, but to the prophets, the Psalms, and the Gospels."[12] Luther was also *activistic* in that "everything [he] did, said, and wrote was driven by his desire to see the proclamation of the gospel."[13] Finally, Luther was *crucicentric*. As he stated in 1519: "Only through the cross of Christ is God's Word revealed; the cross constitutes the only genuine theology."[14] As I have illustrated in chapter three, this crucicentrism received a thoughtful exposition in his theology of the cross. Like Paul and the biblical writers, Luther's theology of the cross calls the church back to the centrality of Christ's death.

Luther's protest cleared the way for a "freedom for faith" from the religiosity of scholasticism and its proud claims.[15] Similarly, a renewed encounter with the cross might help refocus Canadian evangelicalism into a more poignant address for people in their search for a "promising map of the life-world." In order to find its way out of the manifold contradictions and entanglements in which it languishes, the contemporary evangelical church in Canada could be constructively chastened and enriched by a renewed engagement with the crucified Christ.

One's sense of identity tends to shape one's actions. The evangelical identity presented in chapter one tends to account for the comportment of evangelicals that was considered in chapter two. In the third chapter, Luther's theology of the cross was articulated. It is now opportune to draw upon this critical theology in an evaluation of contemporary Canadian evangelicalism.

For Luther, the church's theological reflection must start with the word of the cross. Emil Brunner commends Luther's theology of the cross as a reference point for Christian theology. He argues: "He [or she] who understands the Cross aright--this is the opinion of the Reformers--understands the Bible, he [or she] understands Jesus Christ."[16] "Understanding the cross aright" via Luther's theology of the cross will critique, guide and strengthen the identity of the evangelical church today. The centrality of the cross is the essence of Christianity.

(1) Conversionism

David Bebbington's creedal quadrilateral of conversionism, biblicism, activism and crucicentrism is a useful place to begin. Luther's theology of the cross does not abrogate any of these emphases but orients them in a particular direction conditioned by the peculiar wisdom of the cross.

There is an inability on the part of evangelicals to agree on the nature of the salvation message. Theologically, the controversy centers upon where and when a believer introduces the cross to a potential convert. Advocates of "seeker-friendly" churches have a tendency to deflect the inquirer's attention away from the cross. It is considered too provocative for a seeker in the early stages of his or her pilgrimage. They assert that in order to be relevant, one must be "sensitive" to the hearers. Church growth experts argue that the first task of the church is to bring people to an awareness of their need for reconciliation with God.[17] The cross is introduced only later as a solution that bridges penitent humanity with a forgiving God. Seeker-friendly service proponents Rick Warren and Doug Murren advise that instead of asking, "What should I preach this week?" the minister should ask, "Who [sic] am I preaching to this week, and what do they need to hear?"[18]

Opponents of this approach argue that to withhold the meaning of the cross from seekers is to destroy the content of the gospel. Herbert H. Barber, a Winnipeg pastor, states:

> The proponents of merchandising the gospel should be honest about their motives. They want to avoid the "offence of the gospel." They want to sanitize the message of the cross. . . . What is forgotten is that "offence of the cross" did not hinder the Holy Spirit from making the message the power of God unto salvation to our forbearers across all the centuries in the age of grace.[19]

A revisiting of Luther's theology of the cross would assist the evangelical community in presenting a soteriology that is both relevant and faithful to the cross. The message of the cross, Paul argues, is a message that is rooted in the crucified Christ. It is thus a message that points away from human invention and towards divine wisdom and power. Luther's *theologia crucis* is profoundly christocentric. He denied any knowledge of God apart from the cross. Luther based the appeal of Christianity solely on the

attractiveness of being in a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. For him, "the cross of Christ is nothing else than forsaking everything and clinging with the heart's faith to Christ alone."[20] There are no immediate personal advantages to be appropriated by following Christ. On the contrary, to do so involves embracing suffering in service of the gospel at the hands of an uncomprehending and derisive society.[21] And yet the gospel of Christ crucified is a strangely captivating message: "For in spite of everything faith knows of a 'nevertheless,'" states Walther von Loewenich.[22] This is what Luther found so striking in Paul and what drove him to oppose the tepid rationalism of the scholastics. Heiko A. Oberman argues that it was this emphasis in Luther's theology that resonated with countless contemporaries who found his view to be genuine, realistic and timely for their restive age.[23]

Hans Küng states that "Coping with the negative side of life is the acid test of Christian faith and non-Christian humanisms."[24] Relevance demands that the church confront the reality of the suffering and despair in people's lives. To this, the Bible asserts that the "negative side of life" has been "swallowed up" through the victory that Christ has wrought on the cross and secured by his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:54).[25]

The Christian church was born as a response to this event. It was on the basis of the proclamation of the resurrection of the crucified Christ that the church first grew exponentially within an often hostile world of antiquity. "We proclaim Christ crucified" was the manifesto of the Christian church upon which it staked its existence and the relevance of its message for humanity. McGrath writes: "Christianity has its roots in a moment of supreme darkness, as Christ hung dying at Calvary. . . . The cross remains a present reality, with the resurrection as the future hope--a hope which break into the present, transforming our understanding of the situation."[26]

Therefore, it appears that the dichotomy between relevance and the cross is a false one. As Luther charged, the church must "let God be God" and limit its proclamation to what God has revealed of himself at the cross, not with a preconceived idea of how God ought to show himself according to the wisdom of the age. Evangelistic messages that play to the problems of human existence to which the cross is introduced as a therapeutic

solution are unfaithful to Christianity's historic message of the scandalous cross. They are theologies of glory in that they begin with the human situation and make God subject to human ends. On the other hand, theologies that dispense too quickly with the abject cross in order to possess the resurrection are also theologies of glory. In their haste to arrive at Easter morning, they disallow for the due expression of crucifixion doubt and sorrow that make for faith and allow for one to brood upon the display of divine love suffering on the cross for all humanity.[27] Neither approach adequately faces the weight of human despair.

The "logic of the cross" (Reinhold Niebuhr) is that, by faith, the negative dimension of life is addressed in the suffering cross of Christ, and that in this apparent defeat is concealed the glory of *Emmanuel*, "God with us."[28] Like a flickering light on a hill, the cross summons sinful humanity to gather under its glow on Calvary. There, stricken on a gibbet, is the hidden God--yet revealed in a cloak of shame and suffering--bidding those closer who will admit the reality of their own impotence, nakedness and sinfulness. Thus can humans turn to God to be healed, forgiven and sent out to offer divine healing and forgiveness to others in his name (cf. Rev. 3:17-19).[29] Luther describes the crucifixion scene as *Omnia bona in cruce et sub cruce abscondita sunt* ("everything good is already there--but hidden beneath its opposite").[30] Hence, the cross is the "safest of all things" through which "the things of God are seen through suffering and the cross" (thesis 20).[31] As the evangelical church is more intentional about "bearing the cross" in their conversionist proclamation, letting the scandalous cross do its own work of revealing God's power and wisdom through the crucified Christ, one can imagine that many of the current controversies about the relevance of the gospel and the church itself would be rendered moot.

The cruciform church will thus be a community that derives its mission and message not from the "plausible" assumptions of the culture, but rather from the Spirit of God who demonstrated his power most profoundly at the cross of Christ. The church will view itself as, above all, marked by Christ's death on its behalf. Indeed, it will embrace its own powerlessness in the eyes of the world that it might be a demonstration of the "dying body of Christ" that demonstrates the power and wisdom of God (2 Cor. 4:10).[32]

(2) Biblicism

At the Diet of Worms (1521), Luther declared: "My conscience is captive to the word of God."[33] Likewise, evangelicals accept their captivity to the Bible. In the past however, Canadian evangelicalism has succumbed to a spirit which Richard Quebedeaux describes as consisting of "rational Calvinist scholastics, committed to the total inerrancy of Scripture and the propositional revelation contained therein."[34] Conservative theologians tended to view theology as "the science of God" based on the Bible.[35] For example, as I have stated in chapter one, many fundamentalist evangelicals at the turn of the twentieth century adopted dispensationalism. This theological hermeneutic tended to identify the text of Scripture itself with revelation. It was characterized, in Mark Noll's words, by

> a weakness for treating the verses of the Bible as pieces in a jigsaw puzzle that needed only to be sorted out and then fit together to possess a finished picture of divine truth, . . . a self-confidence that bordered on hubris, manifested by an extreme anti-traditionalism that casually discounted the possibility of wisdom from earlier generations.[36]

While a minority of Canadian churches today would identify with such a strident position on the Scriptures, in fact, many Canadian evangelicals still hold to this "early modern" hermeneutic (Marsden).[37] In his 1993 survey of Canadian Christians, Rawlyk discovered many self-described evangelicals who respond to the Bible with "not an irenic, evangelical tone"[38] but rather an apparent "harsh, backward-looking fundamentalist tone."[39] He explains:

> The evangelical sample was asked to respond to a statement . . . --"I feel that the Bible is God's Word and is to be taken literally word for word." Eighty-one percent . . . agreed strongly or moderately. . . . When the statement about the Bible was twisted in an accommodating evangelical direction, the responses indicate . . . surprising strength, continuing fundamentalist strength in the total Canadian evangelical population.[40]

Rawlyk cites Wendy as an example. She "feels strongly that the Bible is 'the inspired word of God,' and that 'when you start tearing the Bible apart, then you really--I believe in the Bible as it's written. . . . If you start questioning, then it's very confusing, so I believe it as it is.' . . . 'It must be literally true word for word,' or else . . . 'you start tearing it apart.'"[41] It is possible that such a hermeneutic can lead one away from the presence of

the crucified Christ, because, in the view of Clark H. Pinnock, "Propositional theology [or reading the Bible with a propositionalist hermeneutic] that sees its function as imposing systematic rationality on everything it encounters"[42] is necessarily too static to speak to a reality as dynamic as the crucifixion event.

Rawlyk's findings also indicate that although evangelicals state their high view of the Bible, never have Canadian evangelicals read it so infrequently. Only 42 percent of Rawlyk's "evangelicals" read it daily.[43] In a 1997 editorial in *Faith Today*, "Bring back the Book," EFC minister-at-large Keith Price laments:

> If we aren't diligent, we can easily let slip the very foundation of Canadian evangelical Christianity: the Bible. . . . Churches with strong liturgical or confessional traditions have fared better in retaining Bible use than those without those traditions. . . . My concern is rather with the less traditional and more numerous evangelical churches, the "new mainline" congregations as I call them. . . . These churches often drift with the current trends toward minimal Bible use while sincerely attempting to attract unchurched people and be relevant.[44]

Indeed, as D.F. Strauss remarked, "Inspiration is the Achilles heel of Protestantism."[45] Whereas evangelicalism may prefer to believe that like Luther, it is captive to the Bible, often, in its approach to the Scriptures, it is held captive by the lasting effects of the assumptions of the Enlightenment. For example, the air of certitude that characterizes the position of many evangelicals with respect to their personal interpretation of the Scriptures, is closer to the *homo autonomous* orientation of the Enlightenment than it is to trusting faith. Craig Van Gelder probably has evangelicals in mind when he states:

> We must face up to the inadequate or faulty epistemologies that stand behind so many of our models of interpretation, which we have accepted as normative. We must have the courage to reenter the biblical story on its own terms and let it once more reshape our story. This will require us to risk losing some of the sureness of our interpretations if we are to experience the fullness of God's message for us. Reformation paradigms, scholastic-styled confessions, and modernist theological schemes will all need to be placed on the table for renegotiation.[46]

Van Gelder's critique is close to the charge Luther made against the orthodox scholastics of his time. As I noted in chapter three, Luther rejected their speculative attempt to reach God in "his naked glory and majesty" instead of within the veiled "wrappings" (*involucra*) of his incarnate and crucified Son. He believed that such speculations violated the

constraints of revelation and only filled humanity with hubris. For Luther, in order to understand God, a person must turn their eyes away from what they would like to look at in creation, and fasten them steadfastly upon the "backside of God," upon the threatening and inglorious cross of Jesus. There God is displayed visibly as the humiliated and abandoned, powerless and dying Christ. Luther challenges the seeker of God to relinquish the attempt to find God by way of reason and rather view this historical event in which God revealed himself in human history, unconditioned by human expectation. As the church encounters God through the "mediated immediacy" (Baillie) of this revealed event, its hermeneutics will be conditioned by a humility that the scandal of the cross engenders within all who honestly wrestle with it.

Furthermore, as the church lives out its call to be the community of God in the world, the cross will not dull, but rather heighten its sensitivities towards suffering and brokenness within and all around it. Yet far from ignoring the cries of pain by triumphalistically trumpeting the words of the Bible and its doctrinal positions more loudly, the church can engage that suffering even as it is engaged by the Scriptures. The cross event opens up a vista from which the church can dialectically hear the words of a loving God *and* hear the cries of humanity. In so doing the church rediscovers the dynamic power of the Bible to shape its life and community.

Accordingly, thesis 28 of the *Heidelberg Disputation* concludes that "the love of God does not find but *creates*, that which is pleasing to it."[47] N. Thomas Wright captures this point well:

> When Jesus calls us to bear the cross throughout our lives, he is not merely calling us to private asceticism, as though our only purpose were to cultivate our own holiness and salvation. . . . Rather, he calls us to share in his work of drawing out and dealing with the evil of the world; by loving our neighbours, both immediate and far-off, with the strong love that sent him to the cross.[48]

As the crucifixion event affects the church's reading of the Bible, it will reap a potent result within the church itself. Walter Brueggemann describes this process trenchantly: "This text subverts all our old readings of reality and forces us to new, dangerous, obedient reading.[49] As the church worships the crucified God, its members are transformed. Luther calls this divine-human transformation the "joyous exchange."[50]

Eberhard Jüngel explicates Luther's provocative phrase as a dynamic in which the Christian is addressed directly by God's Word. As a result the person becomes "a *creature of change*, who by faith in Jesus Christ is in turn destined to become a new man."[51] This freed community of believers is then able to minister to others as they "forsake their insularity for the sensitive pressure points of human life."[52] This operative principle lay at the heart of Luther's *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520): "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."[53] In his commentary, Jüngel states that for Luther, "the man becomes a servant of all by the fact that he does not remain in himself, but in believing goes as a 'free lord beyond himself into God,' in order to enter into the service of a neighbour out of freedom to God."[54]

As the Christian community reads the Bible with a committed engagement to its context, its proclamation will be marked by humility and service. The mystery of the cross declares that God eludes every attempt to be captured as the patron of a particular ideology. Power and conquest are inverted by weakness and sacrifice. The transcendent God revealed in the crucified and risen Christ refuses to be aloof from human existence. The Son of God will not be disengaged from life's hurts and injustices but rather, in Karl Barth's words, "chooses the hostility of the far country over the safety of the father's house."[55] As a result, the church is judged and refined by the cross of Christ. Ernst Käsemann writes:

> At the cross of Jesus despair ends because boasting ends there, and so end also the insolence of the rebel, the self-conceit of the pious, alienation from God, the idea of sacred localities, folly, and the illusions of those who think too highly of themselves. . . . The dying Son of God does not make alive without putting to death, pardons as judge, glorifies by deeply humiliating, enlightens by confronting with the inescapable truth about ourselves, makes us whole by including us among those to whom the first Beatitude is addressed. For he calls us out of our fancied maturity into childlikeness as the only possibility for genuine life. He exorcizes the world of its demons by calling us away from potential heroes and gods back to human reality and thereby into the arena of simplicity and unaffectedness in which freedom may breathe even in the midst of the entanglements of life.[56]

In sum, the theology of the cross encourages Christians to sacrificial service in the world. Moreover, the mystery of the scandalous cross event is a denial of triumphalist

certitude. Rather God must be approached by a faith--seeking understanding, humbly dependent upon revelation. Thus as evangelicals embrace a theology of the cross, their hermeneutic might well be tempered with humility and their commitment to the Bible might result in an activism that is more distinctively biblical.

(3) Activism

Evangelicalism is activistic. Taking its lead from Calvin, it longs to be world-transforming with the message of the gospel. However, the movement has not rigorously retained Calvin's suspicion of the secular. Hence, evangelicalism in Canada has been influenced more by the culture than vice versa. How might an encounter with Luther's theology of the cross help the church to be a greater agent of redemptive change within society?

Luther saw the theology of the cross as a battle cry in opposing the theology of glory that had corrupted the medieval institutional church.[57] Canadian society identifies with the values of the powerful that Luther attributed to a theology of glory. It lionizes knowledge, monetary success and temporal power--the very elements that prevent an individual from despairing of his or her condition and receiving the grace of Christ (thesis 18).[58] Inasmuch as the prevailing assumptions of Canadian society have infected the aspirations of the evangelical church, one can read Luther's critique of medieval Christianity as an indictment of evangelicalism. Luther writes:

> We must be aware that the active life with its works and the contemplative life with its speculations do not lead us astray. Both are very attractive and peaceful, but for this reason also dangerous, until they are tempered by the cross and disturbed by adversaries. But the cross is the safest of all. Blessed is he [or she] who understands it.[59]

Whether addressing the activist or the quietist impulses of the church, the preaching of the cross confronts the evangelical church's ideological entanglement with the *theologia gloriae*: its pretensions of influence, its theological complacency (*securitas*) and its uncritical accommodation to the values of modernity.

This accommodation is most clearly seen in the many activities with which the evangelical church has busied itself. As noted in chapter two, in attempting to become

world-affirming, there is evidence that evangelical institutions and values have been enervated and are now threatened with collapse by the movement's widespread embrace of values consistent with a theology of glory. For example, recently *ChristianWeek* ran a cover story entitled, "Christian Colleges Suffer Losses: Is There a Crisis in Christian Higher Education?" (1997).[60] While some Canadian Bible colleges are growing, many are not. Senior faculty in several schools have been laid off and most colleges are wrestling with shrinking enrolment and financial deficits.[61] In studying the origins of the Canadian Bible school movement Bruce Guenther says he has noticed a shift in attitude among Bible college professors in recent years. He states: "More people tend to treat it as a job. There's less a sense that this is cause and we need to sacrifice."[62]

The evangelical church has not reversed the trend of the church's "fast decline" of influence in Canadian society first exposed in the 1961 *Maclean's* study. Perhaps the "gravedigger thesis" holds true of the evangelical church. Os Guinness summarizes the thesis as thus: "The Christian church contributed to the rise of the modern world; the modern world, in turn, has undermined the Christian church. Thus, to the degree that the church enters, engages and employs the modern world uncritically, the church becomes her own gravedigger."[63] Hence, whenever evangelicalism revises, updates or practises the faith in keeping with assumptions of its social milieu, it digs itself deeper into its own grave.

In thesis 29 of the *Heidelberg Disputation*, Luther states: "He who wishes to philosophize by using Aristotle without danger to his soul must first become thoroughly foolish in Christ."[64] Luther believed that the church had been coopted by a pagan, Aristotelian world view. He charged the scholastics with capitulating to a speculative methodology that conditioned their knowledge of God. Inevitably then, the church itself lapsed into idolatry. Luther had a warning for this kind of church: "Woe to us, who are so dazzled by satiety and well-being that we fall into the Devil's trap."[65]

The assumptions of modernity comprise the "Devil's trap" for the evangelical church today. As it accommodates itself to the modern realities of say, globalization, it finds that it must also accommodate itself to the forces of secularization. In North America, science, technology, economics and politics have been successively freed from

the Christian faith. Moreover, evangelicals have accelerated this process by placing their trust in the tools of the modern world (e.g., technology, market research etc.). John Seel argues that evangelicalism has "baptized the tools of modernity. . . . [But] the tricky thing about modernity is that its strengths often mask its dangers. So spiritually you are able to do far more than you used to . . . but you no longer need transcendence."[66] Modernity is a double-edged sword. Hence, social, cultural and theological factors have eroded the evangelical's appreciation of his or her own identity so that he or she asks not "Where's the *true* church?" but rather "Where's a *good* church?" In retracing the odyssey of Canadian evangelicalism over the past twenty years Stiller illustrates, perhaps unwittingly, the recurring tendency of evangelicals to mimic their host culture:

> During the '70s evangelicals underwent a radical shift. Instead of being *anti* we became *pro*. Instead of rejecting the cultural trends we accepted them. The 'possibility thinking' of the '70s was reflected in a reworked agenda among evangelicals; many believed that whatever they wanted was what God wanted: 'Since we are the King's kids, let's live like it.'
>
> During the '80s disaffected minorities organized as they realized they had become socially and politically marginalized. So did evangelicals. Reacting to secularism, evangelicals tried to reassert their presence: 'Since God is creator, his laws should be imposed on our nation.'[67]

A renewed appreciation of the cross could help Christians to break free of their cultural captivity to what Alasdair MacIntyre has styled "the self-images of the age."[68] Only by adopting a set of biblical norms that transcend the horizon of the secular culture can evangelicalism overcome its "Babylonian captivity"[69] to secular society. As Luther asserts in thesis 21, the theology of the cross is a commitment to the truth.[70] The redemptive result of this commitment to the truth is a freedom that Jesus promised his followers in Jn. 8:32,[71] such that people are liberated "from their human definitions and their idolized assertions . . . in which society has ensnared them."[72] It is a freedom, that in tandem with the cross, occurs through a season of suffering and self-renunciation. Whereas medieval mysticism understood the way of suffering as a way to the divinization of the believer, Luther reverses this approach and sees in the cross God's descent to the level of humanity's sinful nature so that human beings can be "de-divinized" (Moltmann). Thus individuals are given a new humanity in the company of the crucified Christ.

Luther writes:

> Through the regime of his humanity and his flesh, in which we live by faith, he makes us of the same form as himself and crucifies us by making us true men instead of unhappy and proud gods: men, that is, in their misery and their sin. Because in Adam we mounted up towards equality with God, he descended to be like us, to bring us back to knowledge of himself. This is the significance of the incarnation. That is the kingdom of faith in which the cross of Christ holds sway, which sets at naught the divinity for which we perversely strive and restores the despised weakness of the flesh which we have perversely abandoned.[73]

Liberated at the cross of both a vain sense of worthiness and the compulsive need to do good works for his own salvation *coram Deo*, the believer can now freely attend to the good of his neighbour without slipping into moralism. Luther continues: "This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person."[74] The *sub contraria* nature of Christ's work on the cross justifies the believer; sharing in the sufferings of Christ sanctifies the Christian and enables the person to extend God's *agapé* to others.

Rawlyk's 1993 survey of evangelicals reveals an interesting dynamic. He notices that it may be that conservative Protestants are less accommodating to culture in the broadest sense.[75] However, it appears that this group has the least amount of contact with the unconverted and for them, "protecting the faith may be far more important than sharing it, one on one, with non-Christians."[76] David Wells believes that this defensive stance belies a serious problem of integrity for the evangelical church in America:

> The vast growth of evangelically minded people in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s should by now have revolutionized American culture. . . . But as it turns out, all of this swelling of the evangelical ranks has passed unnoticed in the culture. It has simply been absorbed and tamed. . . . Here is a corner of the religious world that has learned from the social scientists how to grow itself, that is sprouting huge megachurches that look like shopping malls for the religious, that can count in its own society the moneyed and powerful, and yet it causes not so much as a ripple. And its disappearance, judged in moral and spiritual terms, is happening at the very moment when American culture is more vulnerable to the uprooting of some of its most cherished Enlightenment beliefs than ever before, because it knows itself to be empty. Thus it is that both American culture and American evangelicalism have come to share the same fate, both basking in the same stunning, outward success while stricken by a painful vacuity, an emptiness in their respective centres.[77]

In terms of actively participating in God's kingdom in the world, Canadian evangelicalism has not fared much better than the American church which Wells decries. For example, according to John Redekop, evangelicals in Canada appear to espouse a growing concern for biblical social justice but, for the most part, have concentrated on saving souls and left social initiatives to the mainline churches. Redekop writes: "Theologian Carl F. Henry called it the uneasy conscience of the evangelical. We were interested in saving souls, not addressing the needs of bodies."[78]

A lively commitment to the crucified God would militate against such a strategy of religious protectionism. Rather, faith would be renewed. For as Jesus suffered on the cross outside the gates of the city in a garbage dump, so too the church is sent to operate outside the boundaries of comfortable existence and be active in the "garbage dumps" of society. Kazoh Kitamori argues this point:

> Jesus suffered 'outside the gate' in order to cleanse the people by his own blood, just as the sacrificial offering was burnt 'outside the camp' in Old Testament days. We must therefore go to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him [Heb. 13:11-13]. In order for the gospel to become real in this world, it must not enter inside the gate; it must remain 'outside.' . . . It should never become a so-called 'dominant theology.' . . . 'We have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the offspring of all things' [1 Cor. 4:13].[79]

As evangelical activism is marked by such a concern for Christ crucified, it could recover the will and the resources to act concretely in the world where "only the suffering God can help."[80]

(4) Crucicentrism

Emil Brunner describes the cross event as that "which took place once for all, a revealed atonement--[it] *is* the Christian religion itself; it is the 'main point'; it is not something alongside of the centre; it is the substance and kernel, not the husk."[81] Given the dominance of the cross in the New Testament, theologians of the cross argue that Christians must see *through* the cross and not merely the glory that awaits beyond it. Luther argues this perspective in thesis 20: "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering

and the cross. . . . It does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross."[82] Therefore, just as Christians are baptised with the sign of the cross to signify that they are children of God, so the life of every believer ought to be shaped and influenced by the suffering and cross of Jesus Christ. By recognizing the pattern of the cross--a path of suffering that must precede but ultimately leads to ultimate glory--in their own experience, Christians can be existentially certain that they are heirs of Christ. As Luther expresses it, the cross is the ultimate reference point for Christian theology and experience for "through the crucified one, the Christian knows all he needs to know."[83]

For the evangelical Christian, the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus are fundamental articles of faith. According to Rawlyk's 1993 survey, 96 percent of his "evangelical" sample agreed strongly with this statement: "I feel that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of my sins."[84] Nevertheless there is little evidence that the symbol carries with it even a whiff of scandal. The cross is accepted as an historical fact that is instrumental in securing the believer's redeemed status before God. As one evangelical put it, "The cross is not important to my Christian life. . . . The cross seems to be almost overdone. . . . You see it everywhere. . . . Everybody and their sister has a cross around their neck . . . and it doesn't really mean anything."[85] This languid regard for the central event of the Christian faith accords with David Wells' allegation that the theological heart of North American evangelicalism is vacuous.

Because the cross event is a dynamic phenomenon that is embedded in the history and life of the church, Brueggemann argues that "the exact 'bite' of the cross for faith is not static or stable. . . . It is a concrete event that restlessly becomes paradigmatic in various contexts and circumstances of the life of the church."[86] If the evangelical church were to foster a renewed reflection on the cross, it would again feel its "bite." Its crucicentrism would assume more substance. Such a crucicentrism would be an antidote to the pervasive self-preoccupation within evangelicalism which Luther might have dismissed as *concupiscentia*. McGrath expresses how this can occur in the Christian church:

> We are held captive by the picture of the dying Christ. . . . God becomes iconoclast, shattering our neat conceptual [or unformed] pictures of what he must be like by revealing himself in a way which both contradicts and mocks our attempts to pin him down. The cross reveals the fundamental uncontrollability of God, who breaks the mould of our thinking. We are forced, to use Luther's words, 'to begin all over again.'[87]

One implication of recovering the "uncontrollability of God" at the cross is that it unites Christians in humble allegiance towards it. In chapter two, the vast array of ministries within the evangelical universe was noted. Brian Stiller wryly recounts that "Someone has said that evangelicalism is free enterprise at its worst: we all do what's right in our own eyes."[88] It is just such a sectarian spirit that Paul decries prior to his exposition of the cross in 1 Cor. 1: "Now I appeal to you brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose."[89] Apparently the Corinthian community was divided according to its particular preference for one teacher or another. Paul's response to this fragmented church is to beckon the factions to refocus their attention upon the cross:

> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:17-18).

"Preaching the Crucified means preaching our guilt and the crucifixion of our evils," Luther said.[90] Thus the cross is the basis of union among believers.

As evangelical groups are subject to the cross, they might be freed of the factiousness that can so easily characterize the diverse branches of the movement. Moltmann summarizes the liberated, crucicentric spirit that can emanate out of a collective commitment to follow God revealed at the cross:

> Man seeks God in the law, and attempts to conform to him through works of the law in order to bring himself into the righteousness of God. If he sees and believes in God in the person of Christ, condemned by the law, he is set free from the legalist concern to justify himself. Man seeks God in the will for political power and world domination. If he sees and believes God in Christ who was powerless and crucified, he is set free from the desire to have power and domination over others. Man seeks to know God in the works and ordinances of the cosmos . . . in

> order to become divine himself through knowledge. If he sees and believes God in the suffering and dying Christ, he is set free from the concern for self-deification. . . . Thus, the knowledge of God in the crucified Christ takes seriously the situation of man in pursuit of his own interests . . . under the compulsion of self-justification, dominating self-assertion and illusionary self-deification.[91]

The cross serves as a *Wahrheitsorientierung* that cancels all religious pretensions of salvific wisdom, merit and feeling while it clears the way for an "unaffected" faith (Käsemann). Luther's *theologia crucis* bids Christians to imitate Jesus "in the humility and shame of the cross" (thesis 20).[92]

The theology of the cross indicts a spirituality that defines itself by earthly standards of success. Confidence in one's merits before God, earthly trappings of wealth and power etc. are subverted and inverted by God's way of working *sub contraria*. Finding inspiration in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1148) and in Augustine's *City of God*, Luther believed that only the "forsaken city," the church, would endure, an unarmed community of Christians bereft of earthly power.[93] Luther was unconcerned with the church's triumph or victory in the world; his sole interest was that the contemporary church be a faithful participant in the "history of the true church."[94] He saw the church as the "world's most precious treasure, yet regarded as nothing" by the world.[95] Understandably then, unlike other Reformers, Luther had no program. He was suspicious of a Christian community that was too vocal in politics. On the other hand Luther could not conceive of a church that accommodated itself to the mores and aspirations of the culture in which it existed. On the contrary, the true church is a church of martyrs. [96]

I have noted a widespread, uncritical acceptance of many of the assumptions of modernity by the evangelical church in Canada. Obviously, a discipleship under the cross will not comply with contemporary evangelicalism's "odd combination of tepid theological traditionalism with [its] aggressive embrace of certain forms of popular culture."[97] In a 1995 Good Friday editorial in *The Globe and Mail*, columnist Michael Valpy issues a backhanded challenge to evangelicals and the wider Christian community on this point:

> Most people who call themselves Christians have trouble with the statements of faith that their difficult religion requires. . . . The creeds make no mention of the ethical precepts he gave to humankind, no mention of any of the things he did that made him a moral force. Everything is about his death, his

> crucifixion, and the alleged and unprecedented . . . resurrection.
>
> It is what makes Christianity so hard. The seminal Christian dogma of redemptive reunion of humankind with God through the "living sacrifice" of Jesus is a hard sell in a secular world. . . . Sociologist Reginald Bibby, in his new book *There's Got to Be More: Connecting Churches and Canadians* tells us that almost as high a percentage of Canadians now as a century ago identify themselves as Protestant, Anglican or Roman Catholic. . . . Rather than turn their backs on religion, what Canadians are doing is niche-consumerism, embracing selected bits and pieces. . . . The question is, how much do they still believe?[98]

Indeed, Valpy's question is only definitively answered by a way of living that is authentically crucicentric. As the church is probed, tested and corrected by the theology of the cross, the church finds itself increasingly estranged from the accepted norms of the culture. In contrast to proud claims of papal Christendom, Luther views the "kingdom of Christ" (*regnum Christi*) as spiritual and therefore hidden whose weapons are the Word and faith while its subjects are people who are poor and scorned.[99] The course of this kingdom is the exact opposite to that of all other kingdoms and it is thus despised by the world.[100] The kingdom of Christ nurtures a new understanding of success that does not coincide with wealth, social position and earthly power. It shares what power it has with those that have been traditionally excluded from influence.

For Luther, one of the most important results of faith in Christ was participation in his sufferings. Since the cross stands in the middle of the Christian life, the discipleship of suffering is nothing other than following the cross. Luther's theology equates peace not with personal enrichment but with a glory that comes through suffering in conformity with the *passio Christi*. "One who seeks peace," Luther warns, "misses the true peace; one who shuns the cross will not find peace."[101] He believed that the search for peace apart from the consolations of Christ is to forsake the stance of faith and ape a vain and pagan pursuit of peace through a physical, external reality. In contradistinction (for the church) Luther remarked that "Whoever is baptized in Christ and is renewed shall be prepared for punishments, crosses, and deaths. . . . Just so we must be conformed to the image and the Son of God."[102] The cruciform pattern of doctrine and life is inescapable for the disciple of Christ. The theology of the cross reminds the believer that passion and death must precede resurrection. In suffering like Christ one is suffering with Christ. As they share in

his suffering they are to share in his glory. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God," Paul reminded the converts at Galacia.[103] However suffering is not merely a result of identifying with the cross, it is a necessary preparation for adoption into God's kingdom.

If the evangelical church were to pursue a more crucicentric path, it might show more faith in the perspective and outcome of its crucified God. Jesus clearly looked beyond his suffering and death to his resurrection and to his glory. Indeed he was sustained through his passion by the hope of the "joy set before him" (Heb. 12:2). The cross is not an end in itself. Similarly, Luther does not morbidly cling to the cross compelled by a dualistic warrant to suffer. Rather, as Marc Lienhard says it, the cross is a "stage," but one that, to Luther, is "never surpassed here below, a stage of the Christian life toward our glorification."[104] The hope of glory makes suffering bearable.

Because Luther experienced the redemptive fruit of suffering through his bouts with *Anfechtungen*, he came to refer to these instances as "God's embraces."[105] As long as a Christian lives in the security of his own "crossless" theology and works, he has no ear for the "foolishness preaching" since it upsets all natural values and relationships, a reversal that is perceived as "most odious to those who desire to be something, who want to be wise and mighty in their own eyes and before men."[106] Thus the God-fashioned experiences of suffering compel the believer to live under the cross through which God "creates the object of his love" (thesis 28).[107] For Luther the hidden wisdom of the cross of Christ is the well from which true knowledge of God and doctrine are drawn.[108]

Canadian Margaret Clarkson captures this perspective in *Destined for Glory*. She was born into a "loveless and unhappy" home and stricken from childhood with painful headaches and arthritis. She experienced in her early years the full spectrum of human reactions to pain including "rage, frustration, despair" and thoughts of suicide.[109] However, gradually Clarkson began to believe in the sovereignty of God, that "God displays his sovereignty over evil by using the very suffering that is inherent in evil to assist in the working out of his eternal purpose."[110] Similar to Luther, Clarkson states that in suffering God has developed an alchemy greater than the chemists who tried to turn base

metals into gold. As "the only true alchemist," God succeeds in the "transmutation of evil into good."[111]

In sum, a renewed engagement with the crucified Christ would help enliven the Canadian evangelical church. A renewed emphasis upon the cross will enhance the community's conversionism by yielding a message made more poignant in relevance and one that is rooted in encounter. The movement's biblicism will be preserved from propositional sterility because, as a theology of revelation, it will orient the reading of the Bible towards an encounter with God within the context of one's own situation. The activistic nature of evangelicalism, tempered by the scandalous cross, will militate against a theologically compromising level of accommodation. Finally, a fresh encounter with the cross will enrich the crucicentric nature of the evangelical movement. It presents an aegis of unity under which the historically factious groups within evangelicalism might be able to unite. The wisdom of the cross could nourish the movement with a new content of identification and a participation with the suffering. Such a stance would amount to a prophetic renunciation of temporal symbols of "glory" in favour of an existential encounter with Christ "in the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3:10) and for the hope of glory. Loewenich writes:

> The cross of Christ and of the Christian belong together. The meaning of the cross does not disclose itself in contemplative thought but only in suffering experience. The theologian of the cross does not confront the cross of Christ as a spectator, but is himself drawn into the event. . . . If we are serious about the idea of God and the concept of faith in the theology of the cross, we are faced with the demand of a life under the cross.[112]

NOTES

1. Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used To Be* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), ix.

2. Stephen Conner, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 4.

3. Robert Bly, *The Sibling Society* (New York: Addison Wesley, 1996), 161.

4. Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Addison Wesley, 1995), 299.

5. Rawlyk, *Saviour*, 8.

6. Ibid., 116.

7. Trueheart, "Next Church," *Atlantic*, August, 1996, 37, 58.

8. The potential extinction of mainline Christianity is considered a possibility among mainline leaders and academics. See Thomas C. Reeves in *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity* (New York: The Free Press, 1996). He charges that millions of American parishioners are abandoning mainline churches in disgust. Reeves' thesis is credible because he is a respected scholar and a life-long participant in mainline denominations in the U.S. Alister McGrath concludes in *Passion for Truth* that "there is now no doubt that evangelicalism is of major importance to the future of global Christianity," 241.

9. George, *Reformers*, 43.

10. Stephen E. Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 62.

11. In the 1545 preface to the first volume of his Latin works, Luther evocatively recalls his conversion, his discovery of the gracious *iustitia Dei* ("righteousness of God"):

> Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt I was a sinner before God. . . . At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of

> the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live"' [Ro. 1:17]. There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the passive righteousness with which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.

LW 54, 179.

12. As quoted in Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 288.

13. Ian Adnams, "The Living Legacy of Martin Luther," *ChristianWeek*, Feb. 13, 1996, 13.

14. As quoted in Oberman, *Luther*, 248.

15. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 208.

16. Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), 435.

17. For an illustrative discussion of the role of the cross in evangelistic preaching today, see "God's Way or the Wrong Way?" in which Canadian pastors Dave Collins and Herbert H. Barber debate the issue in parallel articles. *Faith Today*, September October, 1995, 22-24.

18. Harold Percy, "Making Church Worth People's While," *Anglican Journal*, May 1997, 2.

19. Herbert H. Barber, "Candy-coated Gospel," *Faith Today*, September October, 1995, 23.

20. Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 120.

21. Karl Barth referred to the inevitability of suffering in the service of the cross as an unavoidable "secondary determination of Christian existence" in which "real Christians are always men [and women] who are oppressed by the surrounding world." *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975), IV/3/2, 619.

22. Ibid., 119.

23. See Oberman, *Luther*, 270-71.

24. Hans Küng, *On Being A Christian*, trans. Edwin Quin(Glasgow: Collins, 1974), 571.

25. 1 Cor. 15:54: "When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'"

26. McGrath, *Enigma of the Cross*, 113.

27. The cross and the resurrection are inseparable events. In Paul, while the crucifixion is repeatedly appealed to as the foundation and norm of the Christian life, the whole story is assumed. As Cousar points out, in Paul's case, "both writer and readers know the complete story, how it turns out, and though the readers' attentions may be immediately drawn to Jesus' death, they are not unaware of his resurrection." *Theology of the Cross*, 107.

Nevertheless, given Christendom's record of turning the resurrection into an ideogram for self-glorification, Ernst Käsemann's concern is valid: "Certainly for Paul too the resurrected Christ is the one who entered upon his lordship. But the cross does not become just the way to lordship or the price paid for it. Rather, it remains the signature of the risen Lord." "The Pauline Theology of the Cross," *Interpretation* 34/2 (1970):174. Furthermore, Douglas J. Hall makes an important contribution to understanding the contextual character of the church's theology by noting that there are historical times and places when the "cutting edge" of one or the other is more needed. Both the crucifixion and the resurrection are inextricably linked. See *Lighten Our Darkness* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 140-41.

What Hall argues is fundamentally true of Paul. For example, the resurrection of Jesus is made explicit in Galatians only in the salutation (1:1). Paul's pastoral concern in this letter is to emphasize discipleship as it conditioned by the cross of Christ (eg. 2:20; 3:1; 6:14). Nevertheless, the crucifixion only makes sense in light of the resurrection. In 6:14, for example, the perfect tense of the verb "crucify" is meaningless if Paul was not assuming that Jesus had been resurrected.

28. See Douglas J. Hall, "The Cross and Contemporary Culture" in *Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971): A Centenary Appraisal*, eds. Gary A. Gaudin and D.J. Hall (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 132-35.

29. Rev. 3:17-19: "For you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.' You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich . . . and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest therefore, and repent."

30. As quoted and translated in Hall in *Reinhold Niebuhr*, eds. Gary A. Gaudin and D.J. Hall (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 133.

31. *LW* 31, 52.

32. 2 Cor. 4:10: "[We are] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be also made visible in our bodies."

33. As quoted in Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 185.

34. Richard Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelicals* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 22-23.

35. Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 65.

36. Noll, *Scandal*, 127.

37. George M. Marsden uses the term "early modern" to describe this approach to the Bible because it champions scientific thinking, the empirical approach and common sense. "Evangelical, History and Modernity," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. G.M. Marsden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 98.

38. Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 121.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., 156.

42. Pinnock, *Tracking the Maze*, 186.

43. Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 122-23.

44. Keith A. Price, "Bring Back the Book," *Faith Today*, January February, 1997, 37.

45. As quoted by William J. Klempa, dixit., *Theology of Karl Barth*, Oct. 30, 1995.

46. Craig Van Gelder, "Defining the Center--Finding the Boundaries: The Challenge of Re-Visioning the Church in North America for the Twenty-First Century," *Missiology: An International Review* 22/3 (1994): 323.

47. *LW* 31, 57, italics mine.

48. N. Thomas Wright, *The Crown and the Fire* (London: SPCK, 1992), 105.

49. Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, to Tear Down: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 17. Although the "text" to which Brueggeman refers is the book of Jeremiah, his comments are applicable to the whole Bible.

50. *LW* 31, 367.

51.Eberhard Jüngel, *The Freedom of a Christian: Luther's Significance for Contemporary Theology*, trans. R.A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 76.

52. Cousar, *Theology of the Cross*, 182.

53. *LW*, 31, 344.

54. Jüngel, *Freedom*, 76.

55. Barth, *Dogmatics*, IV/1, 192.

56. Käsemann, "Pauline Theology of the Cross," *Interpretation* 24/2 (1970):164-65.

57. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 72.

58. *LW* 31, 51-2.

59. As quoted in Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 120.

60. See Debra Fieguth, "Christian Colleges Suffer Losses: Is There a Crisis in Christian Higher Education?" *ChristianWeek*, August 5, 1997, 1, 4.

61. Ibid., 1.

62. As quoted in ibid., 4.

63.Os Guinness, "Mission In the Face of Modernity," *The Gospel in the Modern World*, eds. Martyn Eden and D.F. Wells (Leicester: InterVarsity Press), 1991, 31.

64. *LW* 31, 41.

65. As quoted in Oberman, *Luther*, 257.

66. John Seel, "John Seel Interview," interview by Bill McNabb, *The Door*. January February, 1994: 13.

67. Stiller, *Critical Options*, 19-20.

68. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

69. This is a reference to a pivotal writing Luther presented in 1520. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther addresses himself to the sacramental understanding of the

Roman Church and in contrast, develops a biblical and Reformation conception of the sacraments and of the church. This work represents a theological position that made the Reformation necessary. See Martin Luther, "The Pagan Servitude of the Church," in *Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings*, eds. John Dillenberger and trans. Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 249-359.

70. *LW* 31, 53.

71. Jn. 8:32: "And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."

72. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 72.

73. As quoted in Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 213.

74. Ibid., 53.

75. Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 125.

76. Ibid.

77. Wells, *Truth*, 293-94.

78. John Redekop, "Pursuing Biblical Social Justice," interview by Robert White, *Faith Today* March April, 1997, 29.

79. Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), 150.

80. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 360-61.

81. Brunner, *Mediator*, 40.

82. *LW*, 31, 52-53.

83. As quoted in Oberman, *Luther*, 172.

84. Rawlyk, *Personal Saviour*, 126.

85. Ibid., 162.

86. Walter Brueggemann, introduction to *A Theology of the Cross*, by Charles B. Cousar (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), vii.

87. McGrath, *Enigma of the Cross*, 104.

88. Stiller, *Critical Options*, 52.

89. 1 Cor. 1:10.

90.As quoted in Tillich, *History*, 250.

91. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 68-69.

92. *LW* 31, 53.

93. Oberman, *Luther*, 66-67.

94. Ibid., 270.

95. *LW* 17, 186. Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers a simple and provocative summation of this *skandalon*: "The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us. . . . God allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to the cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us." *Letters from Prison*, 219-20.

96. Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 127.

97. Noll, Plantinga, and Wells, "Evangelical Theology," *Theology Today*. 51/ 4 (1995): 501.

98. Michael Valpy, "Reflections On the Day of the Crucifixion," *The Globe and Mail*. April 14, 1995, 14.

99. See *LW* 14, 184, 328.

100. *LW* 14, 342.

101. As quoted in Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 124.

102. *LW* 31, 225.

103. Acts 14:22 KJV.

104. Lienhard, *Witness to Jesus Christ*, 99.

105. Ibid., 63.

106. *LW* 14, 343.

107. *LW* 31, 57.

108. Barth states: "The crucified Jesus *is* the image of the invisible God." *Dogmatics* II/2, 123, italics mine.

109. Margaret Clarkson, *Destined for Glory: The Meaning of Suffering* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), vii.

110. Ibid., 37.

111. Ibid., 103.

112. Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 113.

EPILOGUE

In this thesis I have considered the major beliefs and tendencies of contemporary Canadian evangelicalism. My research has indicated that David Bebbington's creedal quadrilateral is generally descriptive of the beliefs of Canadian evangelicals. With regard to the actual comportment of evangelicalism, Bebbington's definition is less accurate. Evangelicals are "conversionist" in profession. However, they are not particularly active in evangelizing others. Ironically, the more conservative groups within evangelicalism tend to isolate themselves from society at large in self-protective communities. Evangelicals are "biblicist" in that they honour the Bible as authoritative yet do not refer to it as frequently as in past generations. While many still insist upon a fundamentalist reading of it, the interpretations that they live by tend to be highly individualistic and are not particularly conditioned by the Christian tradition or even the teachings of their local church community. Evangelicals are "activistic" in their desire to transform the world with the gospel. On the other hand, increasingly, they lack the necessary theological footings. Left vulnerable by its own atrophied theological and intellectual life, the evangelical church has been conditioned by its encounter with the world rather than the reverse. Evangelicals are "crucicentric" in the high place they accord to Jesus Christ and his redemptive work. However, the person and work of Christ is now viewed with the kind of certitude that Luther decried in the *securitas* of the scholastics. For the average evangelical, the cross has lost its scandalous character. Furthermore, the inglorious, mysterious and integral cross event is not a source of much reflection. Few evangelicals regard the cross as a decisive location from which to engage the world.

I have identified three tendencies of the evangelical movement in Canada. It retains a healthy tolerance for diverse expressions. This can be explained by a general weakening

of its theological centre. Secondly, it is culturally sensitive in its attempt to be world-engaging and win new converts to the faith. Often, however, this goal is compromised because evangelicals are insufficiently grounded in the theological and biblical resources of their faith. Instead of leading others to the faith, they have become acculturated to the fruits of modern society--to consumption, technology, individualism and so on. Thirdly, evangelicals respond to their secular culture with the gospel message. Again, the movement finds its means in conflict with its ends. Often, in uncritically wielding modernity's tools to reach moderns, evangelicals trivialize the gospel and, in doing so, render their efforts ineffective. Moreover, many evangelicals are intimidated into silence by the current, fiercely pluralist culture. Thus, they maintain a vibrant, private, but socially irrelevant, faith.

In *The End of the Modern World*, Romano Guardini notes: "Christianity will once again need to prove itself deliberately as a faith which is not self-evident; it will be forced to distinguish itself more sharply from a dominant non-Christian ethos."[1] A renewed engagement with the crucified God could help the evangelical community regain its distinctiveness in the culture and thus enhance its effectiveness in proclaiming the gospel. The radical evangelicals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries stand as a testament to the largely untapped spiritual and theological resources that await the interest of contemporary evangelicals. If and when these resources are retrieved, the movement might perceive the attenuated state of its spirituality. Evangelicalism might also recognize that its proclamation of the gospel must be accompanied by performing gospel acts of love. Thomas Wright describes the occupation of a people truly captured by the good news Jesus proclaimed:

> We are called, as the people who claim the crucified Jesus as our Lord, to seek out the pain of the world, and, in prayer, in patient hard work, in listening, in healing, in announcing the Kingdom of this Jesus by every means possible, to take that pain into ourselves and give it over to Jesus himself, so that the world may be healed.[2]

Such a stance is more than a method of evangelism, it is a way of life. This deportment of worldly engagement under the cross would signify to an unbelieving, fitful world that the church has a credibility outside the gate of respectability, in the alleyways of the public and

the profane.

Soon after he made his theological breakthrough of justification by grace through faith, Luther stated that a knowledge of God in his naked transcendence was unavailable to humanity. Rather, God had revealed himself in the crucified Christ. There God is seen as veiled and humiliated, but it is nevertheless God who is revealed. Luther believed that "through the crucified one, the Christian knows all he needs to know."[3] Perhaps Luther is guilty of overstatement here. Nonetheless, as I have sought to illustrate (albeit in a precursory fashion) the wisdom of the cross is weighty with significance for evangelicalism today.

Alister McGrath argues that it is upon the cross that Christian faith is founded and judged: "Christian theology, Christian worship and Christian ethics are essentially nothing other than an attempt to explore and develop the meaning of the crucified Christ in every area of life."[4] As evangelicals concern themselves more and more with the crucified God and the implications of that commitment, their praxis will become more crucicentric. They may encounter God in a mediated, yet immediate way. As they bear the cross, suffering experience may indeed draw them more deeply into the mystery of the "fellowship of Christ's sufferings" and enrich their theological reflection. The Bible could then take a renewed place in the life of the church as God's living revelation.

As in the time of Luther, this is a period of social upheaval in the Western world. Many are searching for new spiritual moorings. Reginald Bibby's research indicates that those themes that have been central to the Christian faith are also themes to which Canadians are showing receptiveness.[5] The evangelical church seems well positioned to offer these seekers its rich Reformation heritage of spirituality. However, it must itself be renewed before it can bring life to others. Richard Quebedeaux enunciates the challenge to the evangelical church poignantly: "The question that faces all Christians remains unanswered. What will we do with the cross? Wear it, or bear it?"[6]

NOTES

1. As quoted in Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth To Tell* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1989), 65.

2. N. T. Wright, *Crown and the Fire*, 105.

3. As quoted in Oberman, *Luther*, 171-72.

4. McGrath, *Enigma of the Cross*, 19.

5. Debra Fieguth, "Bibby Paints Bleak Picture of Church-Society Relationship," *ChristianWeek*, October 5, 1993, 2.

6. Quebedeaux, *Worldly Evangelicals*, 79.

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