
A number of recent commentators, notably Charles Taylor in his *A Secular Age*, have pointed to secular modernity as that period when God becomes just an option amongst many other marketable world-views. One can see this notion of the secular when driving through the suburbs of almost any American city: countless churches with large billboards outside compete for worshipers in the religious market. In such a context, it is easy for churches to become little more than vehicles for the expression of individuals’ preferences and whims. This is Christianity as therapy. The church (insofar as one can talk of such a thing) becomes a socio-political phenomenon rather than a theological reality born of the unifying gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Gary Badcock’s *The House Where God Lives* is set against the background of modern liberalism’s emphasis on the individual, the associated fragmentation of Christianity and the tendency to equate the church with the socio-political norms of the day. Therefore, ‘...in order for us to develop an adequate ecclesiology, we must begin not with the human creature, but with God ... And the doctrine of the church – “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” – can never be made to be merely an expression of what is at best an atheological and at worst antitheological social theory’ (p. 25). Badcock begins his ecclesiology with what we confess about the Triune God of grace, recognizing that the church in which we believe is first and foremost a gift of the Holy Spirit. Three chapters which comprise the first part of the book establish ecclesiology within the doctrine of God by reflecting on God’s election of his people and then, in turn, the key New Testament motifs of the church as the body of Christ (incarnation) and the temple of the Holy Spirit (indwelling): ‘The church as the people of God, body of Christ, and temple of the Spirit corresponds to these “Trinitarian” moments of the divine outreach’ (p. 155). On the basis of this Trinitarian foundation, the second part of the book deals with the life of the church through the themes of communion, word and sacrament.

It is perhaps the grounding of the church ‘in the outreach to the world of the triune God’ that is the clearest focus of Badcock’s contribution to ecclesiology. The influence of Karl Barth is present throughout (despite the usual reservations about Barth’s weak pneumatology), particularly in the
view that the church is the event of the proclamation of the Word of God and the hearing of it (p. 99). Nevertheless, Badcock makes irenic use of a number of prominent theological voices from different traditions, drawing together the Protestant emphasis on the proclamation of the Word with the ‘catholic’ emphasis on the church as Eucharistic community, pointing out that any division of these ecclesial strands can only be an abstraction. ‘Protestantism’, writes Badcock, ‘can hardly resist the implication that its very being as the body of Christ is bound up with *everything* the Eucharist signifies. Protestant persistence in ignoring this is not only distinctly odd, but also theologically perverse’ (p. 284).

In the final chapter, Badcock applies his earlier findings to particular contemporary problems within the church, notably the debate about same-sex relationships within the Anglican Communion. A stinging and, in my view, compelling argument is launched against the tendency to equate the church with an abstract notion of inclusivity. This is perhaps the clearest contemporary example of the reduction of the church to the sociological norms of modern liberalism. Whatever the answer to the problems which threaten the unity of the church, it must be a *theological* answer emerging from what the church professes about God and itself. In formulating his response, Badcock deploys his sense that we cannot restrict the extent of God’s outreach through the church. In other words, there is a kind of inclusivity which is not a matter of the tolerance of individual life-style choices or the preservation of abstract rights, but rather the love which ‘fills all in all’ in judgement and forgiveness. So while maintaining that homosexual genital activity is inherently sinful because it is a privation of ‘the general structures written into created human sexuality’, Badcock wishes to maintain that much heterosexual activity is similarly privative. In other words, homosexual activity belongs within a general class to which all humans are prone, namely deviation from the divinely created ends of sexual *eros*. Once the outreach of God through the church has been extended to include both homosexual and heterosexual sin, then a debate can take place *within* the church which is properly focused on everyone’s need for grace and the forgiveness of sins while being governed not by the norms of secular liberalism, but by the profession of the church. In other words, the discussion will become properly theological.

The implications of Badcock’s reflections on the church are also discussed in relation to the modern liberal state. While the theological basis of the rise of modern natural science in the seventeenth century has been widely recognized, the theological basis of modern political institutions is