

Introduction

Asking the Right Question

On the thirty-fifth anniversary of the radio show *A Prairie Home Companion*, host Garrison Keillor interviewed a Lutheran pastor in the town of Avon, Minnesota, where the show was being broadcast that night. The pastor served a multipoint parish, three congregations (all with Norwegian roots) that were four to five miles apart from each other and where the median age of the members was sixty to seventy years old.¹ Keillor asked the obvious question, “Have you brought up the subject of consolidation?” The pastor sheepishly said, “Well, we have beautiful cemeteries around each church, and we . . .” Keillor interrupted him with the retort: “It says in Scripture, Pastor, that the dead shall bury the dead.”

We are living in a time when survival is on the mind of most mainline congregations and denominations. The viability of the mainline churches is being questioned in nearly every corner of the church, with some prognosticators even predicting their demise. One analyst has forecast that, given certain trends and demographics, my denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, will “turn out the lights” in 2046.² Others challenge this prediction, arguing for the ultimate resilience and viability of the mainline churches in these changing times.³ Either way, it is an undeniable fact that the mainline churches in the United States are in a significant numerical decline.⁴

Since the 1960s, numerous articles and books addressing this phenomenon have appeared, trying to get a handle on why the mainline churches are declining in members and influence.⁵ In 1972, Dean Kelley argued in his book *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* that “mainline decline” could be attributed to its liberal (and therefore, in his view, accommodating) theology, because at the same time these churches were shrinking, conservative churches, which offered a much more rigid and strict set of beliefs and moral codes, were growing. Kelley’s theory is still popular⁶ but it has been challenged by sociologists and church leaders who point to changing fertility rates and other cultural factors as the primary culprits.⁷

Whatever the cause(s), this decline is causing great fear and anxiety in the mainline churches. This is due not only to the fact that these churches are growing numerically smaller, but also because they have lost a certain cultural and social position within American society and are becoming “sideline”⁸ churches, a situation that evangelicals may be facing sooner rather than later as well.⁹ The findings of a 2008 study by the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) confirm conclusions reached in earlier studies: “Americans are slowly becoming less Christian and . . . in recent decades the challenge to Christianity in American society does not come from other world religions or new religious movements (NRMs) but rather from a rejection of all organized religions.”¹⁰

These statistics reflect a trajectory to which Douglas John Hall and others have been pointing for years. This is the shift from a *de facto* form of Christendom that has been operative in various guises in the United States since its founding, but which flourished in a new way in the American Enlightenment. The optimistic narrative of a Christian America gave the Protestant churches a clear role and purpose in society with no concerns about survival. Since the 1960s, mainline churches have found themselves being “disestablished” (Hall’s term) and losing a clearly defined role and sense of identity in the larger social fabric.

RESPONSES TO MAINLINE DECLINE

The crisis of the mainline decline is on the minds of most congregation members, but not everyone is on the same page about what it means and what ought to be done about it. Pastors and other leaders are looking for resources to help them respond to this changing situation. Various books and programs continue to appear, promising to do just this. The underlying question of most of these strategies seems to be: “What shall we do to turn this situation around?” These strategies see the primary issue as one of membership decline and propose solutions to do something different so that congregations survive and perhaps even thrive in this changing context.

Some churches are simply trying to “market” themselves and their message in light of the changing realities. This seems to be the major strategy of Leonard Sweet and others in the church-growth movement. This strategy, which church consultant Reggie McNeal and others have dubbed “attractional evangelism,” involves understanding the culture and its needs in order to be better able to address what churches have to offer the culture. The goal is to draw people back into churches by offering programs that serve people’s needs

(a strategy McNeal refers to—and criticizes—as “if you build it, they will come”) and by letting people know how the gospel is relevant to their lives.¹¹

Others charge that simply bringing more people in the doors is not the solution; we need to “do” church differently. The problem isn’t just the message—it is the form in which the message comes. The so-called emerging-church movement grew out of a reaction to the church-growth movement as a way to explore new ways of being and doing church that are more authentic and relational. This strategy recognizes that many people see the church primarily as an organization or social club and, therefore, as increasingly irrelevant to their lives. Yet, emerging-church leaders interpret that people are not looking to “join” organizations; they are looking for authentic community and deep spiritual experiences. Others outside of the emerging-church movement have noted this trend as well. While interest in spirituality is on the rise, many of these spiritual seekers are looking elsewhere, because, as Diana Butler Bass argues in her book *Christianity after Religion*, they are not finding the authentic community they seek in traditional congregations.¹² McNeal proposes that is because most mainline churches are more secular than the culture that surrounds them. In fact, McNeal charges that most mainline church culture—with its emphasis on membership over discipleship—is not “spiritual enough” to help people with the questions they are asking about life and God: “The problem is that when people come to church, expecting to find God, they often encounter a religious club holding a meeting where God is conspicuously absent.”¹³ McNeal and others propose that an “incarnational” (as opposed to an “attractional”) model of outreach offers the churches a way not only to share but also *to embody* the relevancy of the gospel to the questions of peoples’ lives.

Finally, Christianity’s increasingly negative image problem presents a difficulty that goes beyond simple irrelevancy. The evangelical authors of *unChristian: What a New Generation Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters* offer a statistical analysis about what “outsiders” think of evangelical Christianity: they see Christians as hypocritical, antigay, sheltered and out of touch, too political, judgmental, and ultimately only worried about getting more converts in order to survive.¹⁴ Many liberal mainline congregations are seeking to become places of “radical hospitality” in response to the negative images of Christianity and the postmodern concern for authentic community. Recent ad campaigns, such as the United Church of Christ’s “God is Still Speaking,”¹⁵ have aimed especially at people outside of the church who have a negative view of the church as, for instance, doctrinally and morally rigid.

A related solution to *doing something different* is for the church to *rediscover its purpose*. In this view, the problem underlying the current ecclesial crisis is

simple: we do not know what the church is for. This solution, which Rick Warren has popularized in his best-selling books *The Purpose-Driven Church* and *The Purpose-Driven Life*,¹⁶ involves discerning (or finding) a single purpose for one's ministry or life. As Jonathan Wilson notes, however, even though *The Purpose-Driven Church* begins by asserting "it's not about you," the clear thesis of the book "is that it is about you and your fulfillment."¹⁷ The ecclesiology implied in *The Purpose-Driven Church* is made explicit in *The Purpose-Driven Life*: that the church is instrumental to the fulfillment of individuals, making Warren's proposal not that different from other church-growth strategies.

WHO IS THE CHURCH?

Whether the assumption is that the churches have lost their marketability, relevance, credibility, authenticity, or purpose, these solutions take as a given that the problem is membership decline and the solution is to find the right strategies to address this. What can we do to turn this situation around? What can we do to bring people back into the churches again? What can we do to get the church to grow and thrive again in this changing context? *What shall the church do?*

I suggest that this question, "What shall we do?" and its correlates, "What is the church for?" and "Why the church?," while not irrelevant to the situation facing the churches, nonetheless should not be asked apart from a prior, more basic question. The mainline churches *are* facing an ecclesial crisis, but it is much more than a crisis of declining numbers and membership. There is a deeper and more basic issue that must be explored, one that has to do with the church's theological identity, that is, *what it means to be the church*. It is my thesis that the church today is facing *an identity crisis*. It is not simply that the church is culturally irrelevant or inauthentic; these are symptoms of the underlying issue, which is that *we don't know who we are as church*. Thus I propose that rather than searching for solutions and strategies, the churches need to wrestle vigorously with the question, *Who is the church?* This is a theological question that calls for a theological answer.¹⁸

At the same time, a theological investigation of the church's identity cannot be done in a historical and social vacuum. It is necessarily contextual. To answer the question "Who is the church?" requires attention to the context in which the church finds itself. According to Roman Catholic theologian Nicholas Healy, "Ecclesiology is not about the business of finding the right way to think about the church, of developing a blueprint suitable for all times

and places . . . but to aid the concrete church in performing its task of witness and pastoral care within what I call its ‘ecclesiological context.’”¹⁹ This includes attention not only to the current context in which the church finds itself, but also the historical background of that context. Who we are as the church also requires that we ask, “How did we get here in terms of our thinking about the church?”

Thus the difficulty is not simply that the aforementioned strategies do not explicitly address the question of the church’s identity. An investigation of the historical context will show the larger problem: these strategies *already presume* a concept of the church, one that can be characterized as a “voluntary association.” Further, I will show that this concept is the *de facto* American ecclesiology and *itself part of the identity crisis*. Most mainline Protestants in this country—regardless of what their traditions theologically teach about the doctrine of the church—operate *in practice* with a view of the church as a voluntary association of self-selecting individuals. This concept is centered on the individual and his or her choice to affiliate (or not) with a particular congregation, denomination, or even a “nondenominational” entity, rather than on the Triune God who calls, gathers, enlightens, and sends the church. As we have seen, the majority of responses to the ecclesial crisis of the mainline churches are given with this paradigm in mind, focusing on what individuals want or need and how to attract individuals to the church. This is an anthropological, even sociological, rather than a theological concept of the church.

At the same time, I agree with those theologians who believe that methodologically, ecclesiology is a systematic task that begins “from below” in contrast to “from above.” Whereas an ecclesiology from above attempts to give an account of the “essential nature and structure of the church that transcends any given context,”²⁰ an ecclesiology from below begins with the church’s agency and its concrete ecclesial practices. Nicholas Healy posits that because “the church’s life takes concrete form in the web of social practices accepted and promoted by the community as well in the activities of its individual members,” it is therefore “not unreasonable to describe the concrete church, at least initially, in terms of agency rather than in terms of being.”²¹ For Healy, beginning with the church’s agency is thoroughly theological because the church’s activity is constituted by the activity of the Holy Spirit, which animates it. Healy proposes beginning with the apostolic task and the making of disciples.

Even if we begin with these basic tasks, I submit that the church needs to be a certain kind of community of people in order to accomplish these tasks faithfully. Again, the prior question remains one of identity. While I appreciate

Healy's focus on the Holy Spirit as the source of the church's *agency*—that is, what enables the church to act as God's people in the world—I propose we also consider the Spirit as the source of the church's *identity*. I therefore propose an “ecclesiology from below” that begins with the agency of the Holy Spirit *itself* in the movement of God's economy known as the *missio Dei*—the “mission of God”—which in turn gives the church its distinctive identity.

A central claim of this book is that the church finds its identity in the activity of the Holy Spirit. This makes the starting point for ecclesiology the Triune God and what God is doing, rather than the church and what its members do. Because of the peculiar history of American ecclesiology and the predominance of the voluntary association concept, it is especially important to begin with God and God's activity in addressing the doctrine of the church in this context.

It is also methodologically useful in that it allows a way around the “functional versus ontological” impasse that seems to plague much Protestant conversation about the doctrine of the church. Historically, Lutherans and many other Protestants have preferred to define the church by what “happens” in the assembly of those whom God gathers: the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments. The church's “being” is rooted in what happens in the gathered assembly, that is, God speaks the word of promise. Later Lutheran theologians refer to this as a “word-event” concept of the church. The historic Protestant concern with ontology has to do with how the church's being is related to God's being, a concern that has traditionally played out in terms of monistic and hierarchal concepts (and structures) of the institutional church. In particular, these concerns have focused on Thomistic ideas of an analogy of being and not with the question of ontology itself, which simply means an accounting of something's nature or existence. Many ecumenically minded Protestants have begun to embrace a new ecclesiological paradigm that has emerged since the mid-twentieth century, one that interprets the being of the church in terms of God's trinitarian being as a communion of persons, understood in terms of a relational ontology. Ecclesial communion is modeled on the idea of the communion of persons within the Trinity and is experienced horizontally as well as vertically.

EXPLORING ECCLESIAL PARADIGMS

One goal of this volume is to place the integrally interrelated questions of the church's identity and purpose at the center of a systematic inquiry of

the church's nature: by comparing and contrasting the emerging missional paradigm of the doctrine of the church with these two important ecclesial paradigms from the last century: the neo-Reformation concept of the church as a "word-event" (where the starting point is the proclamation of the word that justifies the sinner) and the ecumenical paradigm of the church as "communion" (where the starting point is the immanent Trinity as a communion of persons).

The missional paradigm proposes that the church find its identity *in* God's mission: the church's identity is rooted in its participation in the mission of God, defined in terms of God's own trinitarian being, that is, a sending God. Because God is a missional God, the church is by nature a missional community, sent out as well as gathered by God's activity. It has become commonplace to contrast a "missional" ecclesiology with the ecclesiological framework of the Reformers; however, the vast amount of literature on ecumenical ecclesiology and its central paradigm of communion (*koinonia*) has not been taken into serious consideration in the same way by most of these authors. This is in spite of the fact that ecumenical dialogues have been the arena in which theologians (Protestant as well as Catholic and Orthodox) have engaged most "ecclesiology proper" over the last several decades. The important contributions of this paradigm—not least of all its emphasis on relationship and reconciled diversity—as well as its limitations should be engaged in the search for a contextual ecclesiology.

Thus, while I will preference the *missio Dei* paradigm by using it as a starting point, I am not choosing it over and against the other two paradigms. The goal of this book is not to argue for a new "blueprint ecclesiology," but to offer an approach to the question of the church ("Who is the church?") that addresses the "ecclesiological context" in which churches find themselves today. Each of these paradigms has something to contribute to the task at hand. My proposal draws on the strengths of all three. My contribution, then, is not to argue for one paradigm, but to offer a new approach to the question of the church's identity that not only integrates the strengths of these three major paradigms but does so by specifically "starting with the Spirit" and using a narrative method to do so. The idea of "starting with the Spirit" is not original to me,²² but a unique contribution I offer is to bring together a pneumatological focus with a narrative method. I have argued that the question "Who is the church?" must be answered first by examining who God is and what God is doing. Rather than beginning with the *immanent* Trinity, I suggest beginning with the actual historical community of the church as narrated in Scripture as it relates to the work of the Trinity in the economy of salvation, that is, the *economic* Trinity. Thus a *narrative method* is most proper to the

exploration of the church's identity. I propose that the question of the church's identity and purpose can best be answered in today's context by returning to the "story of the church," which properly "starts with the Spirit." To discover "who" the church is, we must begin with the story of the church in the Scriptures. A narrative method allows in this task a rich engagement with the Scriptures and, as I will argue, by extension the ecumenical creeds of the church as narrative summaries of Scripture.

I refer to my constructive approach with the designation "Spirit-breathed church." The phrase "Spirit-breathed" heretofore has been used to describe a view of the Holy Scriptures (based on 2 Tim. 3:16), but a narrative reading of the Scriptures would suggest it more appropriate to use this descriptor for the church. The image comes from John 20, sometimes called the Johannine Pentecost, which specifically includes Jesus giving the disciples a missionary charge: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." The Spirit that Jesus breathes onto his disciples is the same Spirit that raised him from the dead (Rom. 8:11), to give them an identity and purpose as a people whose primary calling is not to "bury the dead" but to walk in the new life of the resurrection and be sent out to bear witness to the life-giving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

In this study I discuss (1) the history of American mainline Protestant ecclesiology; (2) two paradigms important to my analysis; (3) the emergence of and significance of the "missional ecclesiology"; (4) the use of narrative analysis in ecclesiology; and (5) conclude with my proposal based upon a missional, narrative analysis of the Third Article of the Apostles' and Niceo-Constantinopolitan (Nicene) creeds. Thus the outline of the book is as follows:

Chapter 1 reviews in broad brushstrokes the story of mainline Protestant ecclesiology in the colonies and in the United States, from the Puritans to the present day. To explore the development of ecclesiological paradigms in the United States, I use the heuristic device of "What question(s) shapes the church's self-understanding?" These questions will be discussed alongside the cultural establishment of Christianity and the narrative of a "Christian America" that increasingly became intertwined with an ideology of progress. I also discuss the development of the voluntary principle and the role it played in enabling the mainline churches to view their identity in this larger narrative. I also review how the process of the church's disestablishment in the twentieth century has challenged the church's identity in this narrative. In engagement with Douglas John Hall and others, I examine how our post-Christendom context and its

questions offer the churches an opportunity to face the crisis in which they find themselves.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine two contemporary ecclesiological paradigms—“word-event” and “communion”—that offer theological starting points for the task at hand as well as both important contributions and some shortcomings. For the first paradigm, which chapter 2 explores in detail, the question of the church’s being or nature can only be recognized by what happens in its midst, that is, the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments. This paradigm understands the being of the church in terms of event. There is less interest in *what* the church is as much as *what it does* (or, more properly, what God does in it), which can reduce the church to functional terms. My examination of the word-event paradigm is typified by Karl Barth and the more recent voices of the late Lutheran theologian Gerhard Forde and Reformed theologian Michael Horton.

The second paradigm, the subject of chapter 3, locates the being of the church in the divine life of the Triune God: the church is the body of Christ, a mystical communion, an organism through which members participate in the divine life, most centrally in the celebration of the Eucharist. The nature of the church as a “communion” is related to the very being of God—the “what” question is more central here. Ecclesial communion is modeled on the communion of the three persons within the Trinity and has vertical and horizontal dimensions. It is interpreted in terms of participation in the Triune God, whereby believers are brought into communion with the Triune God (and with one another) through their incorporation into the body of Christ through the sharing of the Lord’s Supper. This chapter will discuss and critically evaluate this paradigm by examining the ecclesiologies of Lutheran theologian Robert W. Jenson and Reformed theologian Philip W. Butin.

While each paradigm has much to commend it, the chief difficulty with each is the presumption of a *de facto* Christendom context that has shaped both the “questions” being asked the church and the way those are answered. And so, with the change in the context and culture, we must critically engage the questions from this new sociological and theological location. A second, related concern is that while each paradigm has as its starting point God’s agency, each tends to focus on the action of God to *gather* the church—so that its members can hear the promise and be united with God in Christ through the sacrament—but not also the action of God to *send* the church. Because these paradigms developed under Christendom, there is a danger of focusing on the first movement, the Spirit’s gathering of the church, to the neglect of the second and consequently losing the missional aspect of the church’s identity.

Chapter 4 will discuss the historical emergence of the missional paradigm, especially as it has developed in the work of the Gospel and our Culture Network and specifically in the work of two of its leading theologians, Darrell Guder and Craig Van Gelder. The *missio Dei* paradigm takes the post-Christendom context clearly into account in a way that the other two paradigms generally do not. Understood correctly, it also offers a helpful theological starting point from which to address the church's identity in our current context.

In taking up the *missio Dei* as the theological starting point for an "ecclesiology from below" (but one that also draws aspects from the previous two paradigms), I do so with two additional methodological moves that form the crux of my constructive proposal: the use of a narrative method and a pneumatologically focused reading of that narrative. The prior question being asked of the church in the post-Christendom context is not "What does the church do?" (a question about the church's function or purpose) or even "What is the church?" (a question about the church's nature or being), but "*Who* is the church?" To my knowledge, however, no one has yet attempted a narrative missional ecclesiology that "starts with the Spirit." This is especially surprising, considering not only the contemporary context but also the natural connection between the Spirit with the church in the New Testament narrative, especially the Acts of the Apostles, and in the ecumenical creeds.

The first part of chapter 5 will address the use of narrative as a method for ecclesiology. I will consider George Lindbeck's proposal for ecclesiology as a starting point for proposing my own: an exploration of the church's story arc in the Scriptures that "starts with the Spirit," specifically focusing on the church's identity and mission as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles. While this biblical book has begun to appear in resources for the "missional church," many mainline Christians have long been suspicious of Acts because of its association with church-growth movements and Pentecostalism, fearing it will lead to a theology of glory. This need not be the case if one understands the work of the Holy Spirit in a trinitarian framework. One way to do this is to show that my constructive proposal for a narrative, pneumatological, and missional ecclesiology is grounded not only in a fresh reading of Scripture, but also in the tradition of the church. This continuity with the historic church and its ecumenical creeds explicitly distinguishes my proposal from a more traditional Pentecostal approach.

In chapter 6, I consider the narrative of the church as it appears in the Apostles' Creed. Following the trinitarian framework of Martin Luther's treatment of the Apostles' Creed (in his Small and Large Catechisms), one can

posit a “narrative” that runs through the creed and the Third Article in particular which shows these linkages and at the same time can serve as a framework for understanding the *church’s Spirit-breathed identity and purpose*. Finally, I examine the classic “marks of the church” (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) in the other historic catholic creed (the Niceo-Constantinopolitan) as further identifiers of the church’s character. These marks, which have long been used to define the nature of the church, will be explored here as Spirit-breathed attributes of the church’s narrative identity in a post-Christendom context.

I conclude with an epilogue that offers a snapshot of what a “Spirit-breathed church” might look like today and briefly explores how church leaders might apply these ideas in their own congregational settings.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What responses to “mainline decline” have you seen tried in your congregation? Your denomination?
2. Do you agree that the church is facing an identity crisis, and not just a “numbers” crisis? How does asking the question, “Who is the church?” instead of “What shall we do?” change how you think about the situation facing the mainline churches?
3. The author considers three ecclesial paradigms in this book (word-event, communion, *missio Dei*). What are some other ecclesial paradigms or theological starting points for a doctrine of the church? Which ones have shaped your theological understanding of the church?
4. What is your first reaction to the idea of a “Spirit-breathed church?”

Notes

1. The interview can be heard online at http://prairiehome.publicradio.org/www_publicradio/tools/media_player/popup.php?name=phc/2009/07/04/phc_20090704_64&starttime=01:08:05&endtime=01:43:57.

2. Cited in Mark Hanson, “The Future of Lutheran Institutions,” address given in January, 2005, https://archive.elca.org/bishop/messages/m_ELCAInstitutionsJan2005.pdf.

3. For example, Robert Bacher and Kenneth Inskeep, *Chasing Down a Rumor: The Death of Mainline Denominations* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005).

4. Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, “American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008) Summary Report,” March, 2009, 6, http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2011/08/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf.

5. Benton Johnson, Dean R. Hoge, and Donald A. Luidens discuss several theories in “The Mainline Church: The Real Reason for Decline,” *First Things* 31 (March 1993): 13–18, <http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9303/articles/johnson.html>.

6. Joseph Bottum, “The Death of Protestant America: A Political Theory of the Protestant Mainline,” *First Things* 185 (August/September 2008): 23–33, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/08/001-the-death-of-protestant-america-a-political-theory-of-the-protestant-mainline-19>.

7. Michael Hout, Andrew Greeley, and Melissa Wilde, “Demographics of Mainline Decline: Birth Dearth,” *The Christian Century* (October 4, 2005), 24–27.

8. Douglas John Hall, *Professing the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), ix.

9. This is noted with some irony in an editorial in *Christianity Today*: “The New (Evangelical) Mainline,” *Christianity Today* (May 12, 2009), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/mayweb-only/119-21.0.html>.

10. According to ARIS, one in five adults in 2008 did not identify with a religion of any kind, compared with one in ten in 1990. See Kosmin and Keysar, “American Religious Identification Survey,” ii (see n.4, above). This data also is supported by the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, Pew Forum, 2007, religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf. These statistics are also discussed in Jon Meacham’s *Newsweek* cover story, “The End of Christian America,” April 4, 2009, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2009/04/03/the-end-of-christian-america.html>.

11. For example, see Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000).

12. Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity after Religion: The End of the Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 20–26.

13. Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 59.

14. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Thinks about Christianity—and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

15. See “About Stillspeaking,” <http://www.ucc.org/god-is-still-speaking/about/>.

16. Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); idem, *The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

17. Jonathan Wilson, “Practicing Church: Evangelical Ecclesiologies at the End of Modernity,” in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2005), 68.

18. Michael Jenkins also raises this as an appropriate question to ask of the church, for it is a question that encompasses both sides of ecclesial existence, i.e., the church’s divine and human nature. See his *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-Modern Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 94.

19. Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 38.

20. Roger D. Haight, *Christian Community in History*, Vol. 1: *Historical Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 19.

21. Healy, *Church, World*, 5.

22. Orthodox theologians have claimed a pneumatological focus in their ecclesiology for centuries. I borrow this phrase from D. Lyle Dabney, “Starting with the Spirit: Why the Last Should Now Be First,” in *Starting with the Spirit: Task of Theology Today II*, ed. Stephen Pickard and Gordon Preece (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2001), 3–27. Ostensibly, such a move might also resonate with the sensibilities of the increasing number of people in the United States who describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious.”