

PART II

CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGY
AS PARADIGMATIC OF PROTOTYPAL
ECCLESIOLOGICAL REFORMATION

CHAPTER 5

CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

There is something universal, something ecclesiologically foundational—revelationally embodied in the structures of Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology. And this will be naturally un-shrouded along the way in the discourse of evangelical ecclesiological structural components. Considering the preceding analysis of Contemporary Evangelicalism, the structural components of Contemporary Evangelicalism could be identified as transdenominational operation, missional cause, Christological content, and Pneumatic empowerment.

5.1. Transdenominational Operation

Evangelicalism is not a denomination¹ per se but a spiritual and missional movement that cohere with its theological character. A denominationalistic entity is usually preoccupied with its own institutional growth through the propagation of what it

¹ In this work, the terms “denomination” and “churches” are used synonymously, and the term “church” is oftentimes used to mean the Christian church in general. The sociological categorization of church, denomination, and sect could be theologically confusing.

regards as its unique doctrinal proclamation among varieties of claimants of truth. The denominational identity-centered proclamation is exploited as means, supposedly for the salvation of souls but eventually, of institutional expansion, even if evangelism would simply be equated with proselytism. In fact in denominationalistic sense, proselytism is even regarded as an effort to salvage deceived souls from what is considered as apostate churches, i.e., the “other” churches not conforming to its unique truth-claim. Although this ecclesio-missional propensity is, in contemporary times, common among cultic sects; yet it was also characteristic of the general ecclesial mission before the proliferation of Contemporary Evangelicalism.

Further, although the World Council of Churches has been promoting ecumenism, but its promotion is more of socio-political; while that of evangelicalism is more of theological, spiritual and evangelistically missional—thus more ecclesiologically holistic than that of WCC. The onset of Contemporary Evangelicalism has sparked the proliferation of global transdenominationality. Thus Pierard defines evangelicalism as, “The movement in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency.”² Hindmarsh comments:

From the beginning of the movement in the eighteenth century, evangelicalism has been transdenominational, international, and public in a way that is unique in Christian history. This raises new, important questions about how we are to understand the church.³

And indeed, Contemporary Evangelicalism presents a new, or rather prototypally renewed, understanding of the church. At the outset, however, such

² Pierard, “Evangelicals.”

³ Hindmarsh, “Is Evangelical an Oxymoron?,” in *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, ed. Stackhouse, 18.

transdenominationality was regarded as radical, and was even seen as a threat to denominational identities. At times it was even supposed as a means of apostatizing the true Christian church through a syncretistic joint missional effort of what were tagged “false” and “true” churches. This ironical ecclesial prejudice posed polarity in the fulfillment of the common Christian missional cause that evangelicalism was reviving. However, such a prejudice with its polarizing consequence waned as they were overwhelmed by the missional zeal and evangelistic fruitfulness of evangelicalism. And eventually evangelicalism succeeded in proliferating global transdenominationality.

But what is the nature of evangelicalism’s transdenominationality? At the outset, it is significant to note the difference between transdenominationality and interdenominationality. Transdenominationality presuppose a unitive framework beyond denominationalities, while interdenominationality is suggestive of interrelationship purported as common cause but still with a calculated enhancement of respective denominationalities. A transdenominational framework transcendentally drawing in churches together for the regeneration of the one whole church, is on a higher plane than an interdenominational effort. Contemporary Evangelicalism is not merely an interdenominational effort but a regenerative transdenominational ecclesiological framework. However, evangelicalism’s transdenominationality is not a “staticized” ontological reality that could be imputed in the church, but an aspect of ecclesiological operational dynamics that when allowed, would draw and regenerate churches into a meaningfully one holistic body of Christ.

As could be easily seen, Contemporary Evangelicalism’s transdenominationality is not an organic ecumenism but a missional co-operation. The fulfillment of the Gospel

Commission draws churches together to co-operate for greater kerygmatic societal impact.⁴ The primal purpose is salvific, i.e., the salvation of the fallen humanity. And churches are regarded not as objects of devotion, but means for the fulfillment of the mission Christ entrusted to no other corporate entity than the church.

A question however may be raised, “If evangelicalism believes that the mission of Christ is entrusted to no other corporate entity than the church, why the existence of evangelicalism parachurch ministries?” At the outset, it should be noted that parachurch ministries or organizations are not non-church bodies. They are still regarded as part of ecclesial body. In fact, parachurch organizations being distinctively ministry organizations are even more operationally efficient and prototypal than bureaucratized churches. As Carpenter puts it, “parachurch agencies have made a hash out of traditional ecclesiology.”⁵ Stackhouse gives the reason why, “In some accounts, they [parachurch ministries] do what the church in its congregational or denominational form is not doing, is not able to do, or is not doing well enough.”⁶

Thus the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association,⁷ though may not be sociologically categorized as a church; but theologically, from the coming together of churches for evangelism to the congregating of people at the Cove⁸ for spiritual nurturing, equipping, and worship—it is an ecclesial entity. Such an *ekklesia* transcend the

⁴ Thus Grenz sees that, “At the heart of the institutional expression of evangelicalism was a new model of Christian cooperative engagement, the voluntary society.” Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 293.

⁵ Carpenter, “The Fellowship of Kindred Minds,” in *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail*, George, ed., 38. Thus because of evangelicalism’s transdenominational orientation resorting to parachurch ministries, others like Escobar thinks parachurch movement as the predominant definition and make-up of American evangelicalism. Samuel Escobar, “The Church: Help or Hindrance to Evangelism?,” in *Evangelicalism: Surviving Its Success*, ed. David A. Fraser (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 68.

⁶ Stackhouse, *Evangelical Landscape*, 27.

⁷ As well as other related parachurch ministry organizations.

⁸ A Billy Graham retreat center in Ashville, North Carolina, USA.

traditional sociological or sociologically colored theological definition of the church.⁹

This may seem a stretch of definition of the church for many traditionalists; but spiritually, pastorally, evangelistically, and missionally it is more reflective of the prototype *ekklesia* than a bureaucratized church. What is meant here is not the promotion of parachurch organizations over against or at the risk of established churches; but the bringing out of the unique transdenominationality of Contemporary Evangelicalism that could be paradigmatic of the missional regeneration of dogmatized, institutionalized, and bureaucratized churches.

Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology is not a bureaucratized ecclesiology but a movemental ecclesiology. It is not something institutionally confined but a movement transcending the traditional bounds of churches. As McGrath pointed out:

Evangelicalism rejects idea that ‘the church’ can in a way be equated with one ecclesiastical body. The true church is found wherever the gospel is truly preached and truly received.¹⁰

Its incorporation is not institutional per se, although of course, it recognizes and makes use of societal realities, as in the existence of institutions. But rather missional and spiritual, engendering distinct theological character and biocentric concerns assimilated into the nature of churches in the process of revival.

Further, Contemporary Evangelicalism’s transdenominationality is not a

⁹ Thus Snyder disagrees calling “support institutions” as *ekklesia*. “But all ecclesiastical institutions—whether seminaries, denominational structures, mission boards, publishing houses or what have you—are not the Church. Rather, they are supportive institutions created to serve the Church in its life and mission. They are bound and can be sociologically understood and evaluated. But they are not themselves the Church.” Howard A. Synder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 60. Snyder’s definition of the church, however, tends to be more sociologically oriented. Theologically though, an aggrupation of believers called out to fulfill the Gospel Commission, is an *ekklesia*.

¹⁰ McGrath, *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity*, 105.

framework of creedal homogenization of churches but a prototypal theological regeneration of the church. From ministerial associations, to so-called interdenominational (usually Pentecostal), to non-denominational seminaries and even association of churches, a statement of belief is usually framed to which assent is requisite of membership status. This is a sort of external control and somehow still reflective of an attempt for doctrinal homogenization symptomatic of creedalism. However, in a deeper sense, such creedalistic symptom is symptomatic of an even deeper ecclesio-theological identity struggle.

Christians in general is internally struggling on what it means to be more truly the Christian church. There is in Christianity a post-apostolic historical yet diversely theological, ecclesial identity struggles that, superficially or improperly answered, had resulted in schism, separatistic denominationalism, and exclusivistic, yet diverse, *alethic*¹¹ claims. The church, in an attempt to find the answer to this enigma, historically resorted to misdirected religio-ideological approach resulting in the polarization of beliefs and disintegration of the unitive ecclesiological structure. Thus the Christian church has become a pile of embellished ecclesial fragments. Then came ecumenism with its external approach to uniting separate churches. External because the usual approach to ecumenism assumes acceptance of fragmentary identities, while trying to pull together for, at times, a socio-political cause as characteristic of the World Council of Churches. To use Ezekiel's metaphor,¹² this is like trying to glue together old dry bones. What is needed is an internal evangelization and Pneumatic enlivening of the whole Christian church. Not that existing churches are dead per se, but that the unitive

¹¹ That is, truth-claim

¹² Ezekiel 37:1-14.

framework among churches is obviously dead, deadened by the process of ideologicalization and institutionalization due to unresolved deep identity crises.

Since Reformation there was a call for the evangelicalization of the church—the Reformation call however, was embryonic of what was to mature as Contemporary Evangelicalism post-scripted by appropriate Pentecostalism.¹³ By evangelicalization, what is meant is the internal theological regeneration in the framework of the gospel. The church needs to “listen to the word of the Lord”¹⁴—the gospel needs to be the heart, the mind, the soul, and spirit of the church. *The proclamation of the gospel is the missional identity of the church, and the Christocentric content of such gospel proclamation is the ontological identity of the church.*¹⁵ Churches could not be made whole through mere associational approach but through the entire evangelicalization of the church, the process of regenerating the church back into its original and genuine

¹³ That is, Pentecostalism or charismatism in the sense of the Pneumatic empowerment of the life and ministry of the church. Pentecostalism and charismatism is used synonymously in this work because of what is seen as the same essentiality. In fact Rabey and Unger trace the development of American Evangelicalism from the Azusa Street Pentecostal phenomenon to Billy Graham. See Steve Rabey and Monte Unger, *50 Events of the 20th Century that Shaped Evangelicals in America* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002).

¹⁴ Restoration in the metaphor of the old dry bones in Ezekiel’s vision starts from listening to “the word of the Lord” (Ezekiel 37:4-8).

¹⁵ Dabney pose this ecclesiological challenge in the postmodern context, “In such a world I suggest, the Church finds itself facing what amounts to a new and different challenge to its own self-understanding; a challenge that will require us to think through ecclesiology again by thinking through the most basic categories of Christian theology anew.” D. Lyle Dabney, “The Church as a Community of (Un)Common Grace: Toward a Postmodern Ecclesiology.” The Christian Theological Research Fellowship Papers 4(July 1991), cited March 28, 2004, http://home.apu.edu/sCTR/papers/1997_papers/dabney.html. Ecclesiologial rethinking, however, could only be faithful to Christian theology while being a fresh theological construction when it is more reflective of the prototypal ecclesiology, rather than a new ecclesiologial construction based on momentary historical reality or a cultural form. A culture-based ecclesiology simply becomes a cultural ecclesiology. What the world needs in any cultural form is a Christocentric missional theology; for it is in Christ that the world finds ever fresh meanings in life, and it is through mission that Christ is made known to the world. Erickson in the midst 80’s posed a similar challenge. “At present time the focus of this [twentieth century] literature is not the church itself, but other entities. It is time to reverse this trend, for if we do not have a clear understanding of the nature of the church, we cannot have a clear understanding of its relationship to these other areas [like relationship to society].” Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 1027.

gospelcentricity. The wholehearted receptivity to gospelcentricity could result in the restoration of ecclesial wholeness amid broken pieces; and Pneumatically enlivened bring about new wholesome life¹⁶ to the one whole living body of Christ.

Contemporary Evangelicalism being a gospelism, presents before the community of churches a regenerative framework that transcends denominational eccentricities, and opens the gateway for the re-formation of holistic ecclesiological and missional commonality, and interrelationship reflective of the prototypal *ekklesia*.¹⁷

Essentially, Contemporary Evangelicalism's transdenominationality is not merely descriptive of an interdenominational effort, but of a kerygmatic biocentric movement transcending denominational barriers. Although Contemporary Evangelicals promote interdenominational missional endeavors, in fact it is the leader in interdenominational cooperation for massive evangelistic crusades; but this is not all what there is in evangelicalism. There is something even deeply ecclesially unitive in Contemporary Evangelical framework—its kerygmatic biocentric character. This distinctive feature is profoundly spiritual yet essentially missional; it is a synthesis of spirituality and mission, devotion and proclamation.

Christian life in evangelical sense is not a passive spirituality, but an active life of faith—a life personally connected to Jesus, while at the same time a life proclamatory of the gospel of Jesus.¹⁸ Faith for evangelicals is not a mere creedal assent, although it does include the essentials of Christian belief. A life of faith is defined as a personal

¹⁶ New life of the old dry bones in the metaphor of Ezekiel's vision is made complete after being enlivened by the winds—metaphoric of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 37:9-10).

¹⁷ As Abraham noted, "A most significant change [of neo-evangelicals] was the rejection of the separatist ecclesiology." Abraham, *The Coming Great Revival*, 20.

¹⁸ As Paul witnessed, "I don't want anyone to think more highly of me than what they can actually see in my life and my message." 2Corinthians 12:6.

experience of encountering Jesus, experiencing regenerative life, and witnessing to others the bliss of experiencing Jesus through verbal and life witness. Thus evangelical life is proclaimatory of the gospel.¹⁹ Thus for the church to be truly evangelical, it should live the life of Christ and the life proclaimatory of the gospel of Christ.²⁰

Moreover, not only is evangelical life regarded as gospel-centered, but the gospel proclamation is also regarded as biocentric, i.e., purported to change lives. So here we have a confluence of kerygmaticity and biocentricity.²¹ With this overarching character of evangelical life—Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology is not entangled in a denominational web but rather lifts denominations to a higher plane of life and existence—a life and existence that is a confluence of kerygmaticity and biocentricity. And such confluence is essentially Christological, dynamically Pneumatic, and consequentially salvific. With this framework, churches would lose their attention to petty denominationalistic entraps and be restored back to the ecclesial prototypal wholeness and focus. Grenz realizes that:

By uniting together all who are born again and therefore members of the invisible church, evangelicals seemed to have found a practical solution to the perplexing problem of ecclesiology.²²

¹⁹Grenz portrays the advent of evangelicalism as “the quest for the truly Reformed church” whose focus is the proclamation of the convertive gospel “whether inside ecclesiastical structures or beyond them.” Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 47.

²⁰ For further discussion on the gospel and evangelicalism, see R.C. Sproul, *Getting the Gospel Right: The Tie that Binds Evangelicals Together* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1999).

²¹ As Grenz describes it, “the truly evangelical church is a community of faith, understood not merely as the people in whose midst the faith is proclaimed, but as a community of people of faith and of faithful people.” Ibid., 338. In regards to Christian life, Westerhoff states, what evangelicals similarly thinks although in a wider framework than cultus, “Daily life provides the context for expressing the truth we have experienced through cultic life.” John H. Westerhoff, III, *Living the Faith Community: The Church That Makes a Difference* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1985), 56.

²² Ibid., 300. The evangelical framework however is not just a superficial practical ecclesiology, but a more profound theological, ontological and missional framework for the regeneration of the unity and wholeness of the Christian church.

Thus in all these, the transdenominationality of Contemporary Evangelicalism offers a viably meaningful and fulfilling framework for the restoration of the church back to its unitive ontological structure and wholesome operational framework. This may not be tagged an ecumenical proposal, for ecumenism plots an ecclesial direction different from the framework of Contemporary Evangelicalism; but properly, this could just be tagged evangelicalism.

5.2. Missional Cause

A number of established churches are losing membership, succumbing to secular threats, and loosing significance in the life of the people amidst a secularized global society.²³ Many churches are just struggling to survive if not dying. As Barna observes the state of American church in the 1990's:

...the Church in America is losing influence and adherents faster than any other major institutions in the nation. Unless a radical solution for the revival of the Christian Church in the United States is adopted and implemented soon, the spiritual hunger of Americans will either go unmet or be satisfied by other faith groups.²⁴

However, after all, the state of the church is not that all grim for at this time when the world needed the church most amidst the scenario of church decline, Contemporary Evangelicalism offers a new hope for the revival, not just of churches but, of one whole church. And an aspect of this hope hinges on evangelicalism's revival of the missional life of the church.

²³ For a challenge on living Christian faith amidst a world getting less Christian see, R.R. Reno, *In the Ruins of the Church: Sustaining Faith in an Age of Diminished Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002).

²⁴ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1998), 1. This could be descriptive of established churches that are losing missional zeal. However, mega-churches that are Christocentric and Pneumatic are also popping up.

Mission is a prominent emphasis of evangelicalism.²⁵ But what is mission in Contemporary Evangelical sense? The mission of the church, in evangelical sense, is a kerygmatic-salvific mission, i.e., the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of fallen humanity. As paradigmatic of the prototypal ecclesial mission, Contemporary Evangelicals preach the need for regeneration, accepting Jesus as the only personal Savior, and living in a new life, then witnessing for Jesus to others. It emphasize that the only hope of humanity, the only salvific means, is Jesus. Mission for evangelicals is primally soteriological, not socio-political or institutional. It regards the church as a venue for nurturing and equipping believers for the fulfillment of the Gospel Commission, thus a corporate resource for accomplishing the mission. The existence and life of the church should cohere with its missional fulfillment. The church does not exist for itself, nor is the soteriological end, but a means for a soteriological end. The intended teleological objective is not the coming of people to an ecclesial institution, but the coming of people to Christ.

As Roof, a professed liberal, states it, “The church is not an end in itself, it is an earthen vessel from which sacrifice and service and proclamation must constantly be poured out.”²⁶ The coming of people to church is a natural socio-spiritual outcome of a soteriological end.²⁷ Reciprocally then, the church is primarily a missional, pastoral, and soteriological means, an instrument rather the origin of salvation. The church nurture and sent out believers for mission, rather than secures and dispenses salvation. The church is

²⁵ For an articulation of an evangelical missional agenda; see Billy Graham Center, *An Evangelical Agenda: 1984 and Beyond* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979).

²⁶ Wade Clark Roof, “The Church in the Centrifuge,” *The Christian Century* (November 8, 1989):1014.

²⁷ As Rainer sees it, “The call for churches today is for growth that is soteriocentric.” Thom S. Rainer, “New Dimensions in Evangelicalism and Church Growth,” in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought*, ed. Dockery, 425.

a venue for nurturing spiritual life so that when believers proclaim the gospel there lives cohere with their proclamation. As Phillips and Okholm emphasize, “The church is God’s family (Matt. 12:48-50) where his children are nurtured and trained to be his disciples.”²⁸

Evangelicalism provides a non-confusing definitive mission of the church—to evangelize, i.e., to proclaim the gospel of Christ so that people would be given the opportunity to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and be saved. The mission of the church is definitely a salvific kerygmatic mission. The making of disciples is the nurturing of those who accepted Jesus as their personal Savior, and not a subjugatory claim of people or society, for this impinge on the volitional gift the Creator God imparted to humans. However, such spiritually-oriented soteriological mission does not exclude humanitarian and societal concerns,²⁹ as in alleviating sufferings and poverty³⁰ and the restoration of societal moral integrity. As the means of fulfilling the gospel of Christ, it should be naturally replete with acts of love, and the propagation of Christocentric values.

²⁸ Phillips and Okholm, *A Family of Faith*, 118.

²⁹ Preston even identifies evangelical involvement in the politics of Third World Countries, see Paul Preston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). However, it should be noted that political involvement in these countries may be more descriptive of the involvement of liberal churches than the crusade and humanitarian oriented evangelicals. For a brief discussion on the development and stunting of evangelical social concern, see Gary Scott Smith, “The Man and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-12: New Perspective on Evangelical Social Concern and the Relationship Between Christianity and Progressivism,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (Spring 1987): 91-118. Tinker discusses further on present issues confronting evangelicals, see Melvin Tinker, *Evangelical Concerns: Rediscovering the Christian Mind on Issues Facing the Church Today* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2001).

³⁰ Gaebelein poses this challenge to evangelicals amidst a materialistic world, “The prevalent confusion of success with material things and the growing sense of entitlement to more and more possessions—and evangelicals are by no means free from it—can get the nerve of compassionate concern for our suffering brothers and sisters for whom Christ died.” Frank E. Gaebelein, “Evangelicals and Social Concerns,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (March 1982):22.

Further, evangelical ecclesiology is not an ontological type of ecclesiology engrossed on the reflection and exposition of the philosophical nature and being of the church. It is a missional and functional ecclesiology, a dynamic rather than static ecclesiological paradigm. Such missional dynamicity that transcends the traditional ontological orientation in ecclesiology, confuse some theologians on the real nature of Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology. Other theologians are even in doubt if there is really such thing as Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology. Because of Contemporary Evangelical missional preoccupations, churches whose missional zeal has been overshadowed by other institutionalized concerns, regard evangelicalism as a mere missional movement rather than a holistic ecclesiological movement. And indeed Contemporary Evangelicalism is not an institutional or denominational movement itself, although there are attempts to embody its conceptual framework into an ecclesial institution. Although it is usually regarded as preeminently a missional movement, however, its being a missional movement is just an aspect of its wider intended purpose. While being a missional movement, it is also an ecclesiologically restorative movement. Its pastorate transcends denominational enclosures, and is intended to pastorally regenerate the whole Christian church, so that the whole Christian body could fulfill its evangelistic mission. Thus in essence, its mission is both pastoral and evangelistic.

Moreover, mission in Contemporary Evangelicalism is regeneratively biocentric. Its missional objective is not just a theoretical affirmation of Christian beliefs, or a theoretical reconstruction of the church; but the transformation of life of both unbelievers, nominal Christians, and the declining churches. The transformation of life is seen as the consequence of true and deep encounter with Christ resulting in the acceptance of Jesus

as personal Savior, and experiencing a sustainable new life in Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Christianity, in evangelicalistic sense, is not just a matter of belief but also a matter of life. This regenerative biocentric focus is truly reflective of the discipleship mission of the prototypal church—the disciples were commissioned to teach believers how to observe the teachings of Christ, i.e., to live like Christ. The essence of discipleship is living Christ’s exemplary life on earth. The regenerative biocentric objective is both a kerygmatic structural component and an intended salvific experiential consequence.

Furthermore, evangelicalism’s missional cause promotes ecclesiological operational wholeness. With Contemporary Evangelicalism’s transcendence over denominational enclosure, its evangelistic mission become apparently Christocentric, rather than ecclesiocentric. As such it draws Christian believers together both individually and congregationally to fulfill their missional calling. It could be intuitive to say that as in Billy Graham crusades, the Holy Spirit is working among believers and churches, convicting them of participatory need and drawing them altogether to fulfill the one common evangelistic mission. But indeed, experientially and pragmatically the called out individual Christians and churches could be seen as exhibiting Pneumatic zeal as they come together and unitedly play complimentary roles to fulfill the common gospel proclamation. In this sense, could be seen the “ecclesiogenization” of churches. Churches are awakened, becomes zealous, and Pneumatically enlivened, then naturally drawn and fitted together into one spiritually alive and evangelistically proclaiming body of Christ. Ecclesial operational wholeness becomes deeply spiritual and missional, phenomenologically natural and internally Christocentric and Pneumatic. This is quite a

contrast to model other ecumenical approaches that is socio-political, artificial, merely academic, and operationally superficial.

5.3. Pneumatic Empowerment

Contemporary Evangelicalism recognizes the necessity of Pneumatic empowerment in a more appropriate sense than that of extremistic charismaticism. As aforementioned, Pentecostalism is regarded as the postscript that the Contemporary Evangelical framework aptly needed. For Stott, an evangelical theologian, emphasizes “the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the chief distinguishing mark of the people of God today...”³¹ Vanhoozer adds, “The church is...the people of God filled with the Spirit of God.”³² However, it is not the kind of charismatism that is self-centered,³³ i.e., meant merely for the emotive elation to an exhilarating trance state of liturgical participants. Evangelicals believe on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit but are wary of this kind of charismaticism. This does not mean that evangelicalism negates healing miracles, prophecy, or the Pneumatic primal role in regeneration—evangelicals do believe on these. However, the evangelical framework of Pneumatic empowerment is practical rather than basically emotive. Pneumatic empowerment is viewed in a utilitarian perspective, i.e., as the foundational and valuable power for accomplishing the mission and conversion of life.

³¹ Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, 93.

³² Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal about the Ministry and Minstrelsy of Theology,” in *Evangelical Futures*, ed. Stackhouse, 103.

³³ Kung, a professing Catholic theologian, has this to say, “So charisms are not special marks of distinction belonging to a chosen few...but a distinguishing mark of the whole church, of the fellowship of all believers.” Hans Kung, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 187.

Bloesch defines charism is an ecclesiologically utilitarian sense:

A charism...signifies a special gift or power which enables one to perform a particular service. The charisms were given by the Spirit primarily for the upbuilding of the church.³⁴

Wolf affirms such evangelical concept of charism:

Although all of Christian life is lived in the Spirit, it is not charismatic as a whole. Charisma has a narrower meaning in its reference to a particular capacity given by the Spirit of Christ for a particular ministry in church or world.³⁵

However, evangelicalism does not also do away with the spiritual experiential encounter with the Holy Spirit amidst liturgy, but such Pneumatic encounter is always Christologically oriented, i.e., an experience with the Holy Spirit leading to a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Jesus. Or for the non-believers, a spiritual encounter resulting in the acceptance of Jesus as personal Savior. This would at times be emotional but not wildly hysterical and chaotic, devoid of convertive awareness and apparent Christological consciousness.

Pneumatic empowerment is seen as a missional and convertive empowerment. As in Billy Graham crusades, numerous networks of prayer groups invoke Pneumatic operation for evangelistic success. The Holy Spirit is regarded as the absolute power behind the fulfillment and success of every evangelistic effort. The indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in evangelical's salvific kerygmatic mission is regarded in the following senses:

1. In convicting people of their sinfulness and their dire need of accepting Jesus as the only personal Savior; and

³⁴ Donald G. Bloesch, *The Reform of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 109.

³⁵ Miroslav Wolf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 229.

2. In charismatically empowering the missional human resources, e.g., preachers, singers, and other participants in crusades, or other evangelistic endeavors.

With the sense of Pneumatic presence, evangelicals feel enthused and alive in their evangelistic endeavors, without it they feel un-animated. The Holy Spirit is the power behind the evangelization of people with due regard to their volitional options. Without the Holy Spirit the preacher and his message becomes a “tingling cymbal” so to speak. It is the Holy Spirit that transforms a human proclamation into words of life that opens the salvific gateway for the hearers. Wingren expresses a concept descriptive of an evangelical perspective of Pneumatological kerygmaticity:

When the Spirit breathes on man, they begin to *speak* and their words go out to the converted. Thus the kerygma can actually be the means of restoring a fragmented and disintegrated humanity.³⁶

Evangelicalism regards the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost as a missional kerygmatic inauguration. The outpouring was meant to empower the believers to proclaim the Christocentric soteriological message. It was not meant as a spiritual exhibit or as affirmation of salvific realization in individuals mystically caught up amidst a liturgy. When the Holy Spirit was outpoured, believers began preaching the gospel in understandable languages. The Pentecost was a kerygmatic linguistic empowerment of the zealous yet linguistically incapable believers.

Acts portrays the event:

“These people are all from Galilee, and yet we [Jews coming from various ethnic-linguistic groups] hear them speaking the languages of the lands where we were born! Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt and the areas of Libya, Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to

³⁶ Gustaf Wingren, *Gospel and Church*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Edinburgh: Olive and Boyd, 1964), 106.

Judaism), Cretans, and Arabians. And we all hear these people speaking in our languages about the wonderful things God has done!”³⁷

The Holy Spirit enabled the believers to speak in known languages they were unable to speak, for the purpose of proclaiming the message of salvation in Christ Jesus. Contemporary Evangelicalism does not confuse the missional gift of tongue with the personal spiritual groaning amidst struggles in life while praying.³⁸ The former is for public evangelistic purpose, the latter is for personal spiritual purpose. The essence of the Pentecostal event is seen as the Pneumatic empowerment of the believers in the fulfillment of their evangelistic mission. The “gift of tongues” was seen as an occasional linguistic bestowment contingent on their present need. Evangelicals recognize the waning of such supernatural need with the conversion of multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic believers who are able to preach in their respective languages.³⁹

Evangelicals do recognize the gift of healing and other spiritual gifts, however, these gifts are seen in the perspective of mission and discipleship, i.e., as spiritual tools in fulfilling the Gospel Commission and in nurturing fellow believers. However, the moodal ambiance of reception and utilization of spiritual gifts is more kerygmatic and spiritual rather than mystical and emotive. The missional and pastoral empowerment of the Holy Spirit is an essential structure in evangelical ecclesiology.

³⁷ Acts 2:7-11.

³⁸ Paul notes, “And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don’t even know what we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.” Romans 8:26-27.

³⁹ Coppedge, however, sees the Pentecostal event as an ecclesial birthing event rather than as a linguistic missional equipping event itself. He writes, “Unquestionably, the day of Pentecost was a distinct historical event and in the sense that it represents the birth of the New Testament church, its events are indeed unique and not repeatable.” Coppedge, *The Biblical Principles of Discipleship*, 122. Acts portrayal of the event, however, was more of a missional commencement rather, than an institutional ecclesial birthing, itself.

Furthermore, Pneumatic empowerment in evangelical sense is also meant for biocentric transformation and sanctification. The Pneumatic spiritual operation in individual is not seen as occasional but continuous. Aside from the bestowal of spiritual gifts, the role of the Holy Spirit in regenerative sanctification of believers is an essential faith structure in evangelical life. As Bloesch emphasizes, “Certainly true spirituality will also emphasize the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for there can be no Christian life that is not inspired by the Spirit.”⁴⁰ New life in Christ is actually a new life in Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit. Ecclesiologically, this implies that the regeneration of ecclesial life is neither merely institutionally structural, nor merely associational, nor merely liturgical⁴¹ but essentially Pneumatic. Spiritual empowerment is what the church needs as a whole for revival; without spiritual revival churches would continue to regress towards its deadening propensity. Bloesch challenges, “If we are to have spiritual renewal in our time, the church must be open again to the special gifts and charisms given by the Spirit of God for the purpose of ministry in the world.”⁴² As paradigmatic in evangelical missional strategy, spiritual revival of the church is requisite for the fulfillment of its salvific kerygmatic mission. The *re*-formation of the prototypal structure of the church necessitates Pneumatic empowerment and spiritual revival. Ferguson points out the essentiality of the Holy Spirit in the existence of the church:

If the church is the body of Christ, the Spirit is the life of the body. Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so without the Holy Spirit there would be no church, no community at all.⁴³

⁴⁰ Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity*, 133.

⁴¹ As in mere organizational restructuring, formation of association of churches, or liturgical renewal.

⁴² Bloesch, *The Reform of the Church*, 114.

⁴³ Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 107.

Thus in evangelical ecclesial Pneumaticity is a biocentric structure intended for the empowerment of individual convertive and missional life. This emphasis on the Pneumatic structure of the church is very relevant in the context of institutionalized and bureaucratized churches, whose operations have been secularized resulting in the disfranchisement of their Pneumatic essentials. Ironically however, on the other hand, the misdirected Pneumatic emphasis in other extremistic charismatic churches has also resulted in the disfranchisement of the essential Christological content and Biblical epistemology and their substitution with emotionalism and subjective revelative claims. McGrath notes the evangelical concern on extremistic charismaticism: “word-centered evangelicals often express a concern that an emphasis on the Holy Spirit might result in Scripture’s being bypassed in favor of an immediate personal revelation to an individual.”⁴⁴ Lovelace however, identifies charismaticism as a Puritan carryover, thus an evangelical heritage at that, but ironically lacking evangelical epistemological control.

He comments:

The charismatic renewal continues to express the mystical spirituality of the Puritan and Awakening eras, but often without the rational and theological checks against error and credulity maintained by evangelicals.⁴⁵

Here again is an example of a common blunder in the history of Christian church—a fragmentary ecclesiological construction based on an aspect of a progressive historical revelation intended for the regeneration of the church into its balanced and wholesome state. It is in the backdrop of this ironical and polarizing ecclesial life situation, that Contemporary Evangelicalism offers a balanced holistic framework. How? It positions the components of ecclesiological framework in its appropriate place—*the*

⁴⁴ McGrath, *Evangelicals & the Future of Christianity*, 70.

⁴⁵ Lovelace, “Evangelical Spirituality,” 33. This criticism, however, could not be appropriate to a framework of balanced Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism.

operation is transdenominational, the cause is missional, the power is Pneumatic, and the content is Christological.

5.4. Christological Essence

It might be awkward to call Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology Christological, for this seems not a fit to existing ecclesiological models, e.g., sacramental, mystical, institutional, etc. Christological is usually regarded as descriptive of a theological content and of not an ecclesiological model. However, in the context of evangelicalism being a movement, and a Christocentric movement at that, whose proclamatory content is Christological; evangelicalism offers a new innovative Christological ecclesiological category. Such a category may seem unfit to an institutional ecclesiological mindset, but in the framework of movemental *ekklesia*, it provides a theologically succinct and meaningful ecclesiological model.

As in every ecclesiological model, the ecclesial focus becomes the ecclesiological characterization. When a particular ecclesial body focuses on liturgy, it becomes a liturgical church. When a church focuses on spiritual gifts, it becomes a charismatic church. When a church focuses on its institutional elements, it becomes an institutional church. Thus we have different models that are shaped according to their respective focus. Evangelicalism as a missional movement, is a kerygmatic church, and being a kerygmatic church it is not only Christocentric but also Christological. The church exists to proclaim Christ and his message of salvation, and to guide people to Christ both

evangelistically and pastorally.⁴⁶ It exists in and for Christ. Its existential derivation and kerygmatic content becomes its ecclesiological essence. With such Christologicality and Christocentricity the church could transcend its fragmentary and distortive human frailties. The church is lifted up to its true plane of existence and purpose.

It is in this framework that Contemporary Evangelicalism offers not only a regenerative missional movement but also a regenerative ecclesiological movement. Evangelical ecclesiological framework is restorative of the prototypal Christocentric and Christological nature of the *ekklesia* that historically, churches since the ecclesial theological fall, have marred. Like the marring of the archetypal *imago Dei* in human nature at the Fall, the *imago Christi* in ecclesial nature has also been marred since the ecclesial fall.⁴⁷ By emphasizing Christ, Contemporary Evangelicalism is guiding churches to where it properly belongs—and to Christ—as one whole body.

5.5. Conclusion

These aforementioned components properly fitted together in the perspective of Pneumatic ecclesiological revelation, form a distinct Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology that offers hope, not only for the survival of prototypal Christianity but also, for the fulfillment of the *raison d'être* of the church. Pneumatic ecclesiological revelation, for indeed, the evangelical ecclesiological structure is revelatory and

⁴⁶ Thus as Tidball observes, “The evangelical’s primary concern is not with the fixed ecclesiastical structures but with people who are Christians whatever denominational label they wear or structure they inhabit.” Derek J. Tidball, *Who Are the Evangelicals: Tracing the Roots of the Modern Movement* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 158.

⁴⁷ I would identify the fall not in the sense of the total obliteration of ecclesial essence, but a process when the one whole church began assimilating paganistic culture diluting its pure Christocentricity and Christological structures, then fragmenting itself into separatistic entities.

paradigmatic of the prototypal ekklesia. *Raison d'etre*, for indeed Contemporary Evangelicalism is very reflective of the primally missional, with corollary pastoral, purpose for which the prototypal church was called. What then are the implications of these Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiological structures? *Synthesizing these structures could spark a New Reformation!*

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SYNTHESIS OF CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

Synthesizing Contemporary evangelical ecclesiological structures is revelatory of implications very foundational in the transformation of the church to something that it is more truly meant to be—both in terms of its nature and purpose, and the fulfillment of its purposeful nature and its natural purpose. Evangelicalism does have a distinct ecclesiology, even a prototypal reformative ecclesiological framework.¹

As aforementioned in the preceding Chapter, what we have in evangelical ecclesiological framework is a church that is Christocentrically biocentric and missionally empowered by the Holy Spirit operating transdenominationally. This is an awesome ecclesiological framework that could paradigmatically enable churches to lay aside their respective ecclesio-centricities and be caught up together to become one whole archetypal ecclesial community. This scenario is metaphoric of the resurrection,

¹ As McGrath argues, “Those who accuse evangelicals of having ‘immature’ or ‘underdeveloped’ theories of the church might care to ask themselves whether they might not have hopelessly overdeveloped theories.” McGrath, *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity*, 82. Mouw adds, “Evangelicals have long worried about ecclesiological perspectives that are so highly detailed and all-consuming that they crowd out other important theological concerns. So we respond by emphasizing some things, such as the need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and for evangelizing the lost, that are often neglected by people who take delight in detailed ecclesiologies.” Mouw, “Evangelical Ethics,” in *Where Shall My Wond’ring Soul Begin?*, eds. Noll and Thiemann, 75.

transformation, and ascension of believers into one whole new humanity at the Second Coming. Before the ascension of Christ after resurrection, there was the apostolic embryonic *ekklesia* of a few people who were wondering what to do but finally was commissioned on what to do at ascension. Before the descend of the Holy Spirit, their was a growing *ekklesia* of people who knew what to do, but do not know how to do it, then finally at the Pneumatic advent were empowered on how to do what they were all enthused to do. At the *parousia*, the *ekklesia*, i.e., the aggrupation of all called out ones, in fact a great multitude, would be receiving their reward and be ushered into the fully restored prototypal cosmos—where they all, as one, then becomes the restored prototypal humanity.

In this perspective, the church, to remain true to itself, should remain in the continuum of its teleological history² and objective. To deviate from this continuum would result in the de-ecclesiogenization of the church, changing it into a mere social organization. The continuum is an archetypal, dynamic, and eschatologically-oriented historical continuum. It is not a stretching of an incidental post apostolic construction, as if the *telus* is inherently confined in such non-archetypal construction. Nor the continuum could be terminated to a pre-*parousiac eschaton*; nor breaking the ecclesial embryo, or any of the aspects of its developmental phase, from its eschatological continuum. Thus ecclesiology, to maintain its integrity, should be holistic, with historical continuity, and is progressively teleological.

² Hodgson recognizes that the, “Ecclesia is an image...and foretaste of the basilea, embodied in a diversity of historical churches.” Hodgson, “Ecclesia of Freedom,” 226. The church however, can not be equated with the basilea, it is simply a divine-human agency to usher people in the present realm to the eschatological realm. It is a mediatorial society, a bridge between this world and the kingdom of God separated by a gulf of sin.

Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology is holistic because it does not promote a particular ecclesiological³ aspect but rather is regenerative of the whole prototypal ecclesiological framework. Further, evangelicalism is not merely an institutional movement, but a process of continuous Pneumatic revelation and operation in the history of Christian church⁴ intended for the reformation of the church, so that it could fulfill its pastoral and kerygmatic purpose anticipatory of the *parousia*. Although embryonic evangelicalistic movement began at Reformation as a movement purported to reform the deformed ecclesial institution; however, the evangelical framework is not merely a medieval construction but a revival of prototypal ecclesiological characteristics, thus ameliorating the historical connectivity with the apostolic *ekklesia*. Evangelical ecclesiology does not also regard itself as an organic end, confining the eschatological *telos* in itself, but rather as an instrument purported to lead and guide people towards the eschatological end.

In the process of evangelicalization maturing in Contemporary Evangelicalism could be seen a very special ecclesiology that implies the following:

³ McGrath comments, “Evangelicalism is committed to the church, in the sense of a corporate conception of Christian life. But this does not mean that it is committed to any one *denominational* understanding of the nature of the church.” McGrath, *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity*, 79. However, it should be noted that evangelicalism is not a separatistic movement, but rather a reviving movement for the church as a whole. Thus if ever it is characterized as having a denominational ecclesiological commitment, such commitment is not strictly speaking denominational per se, but rather prototypal and holistic, i.e., intended for the restoration of the whole prototypal structures in the one whole Christian church.

⁴ Mudge has this to say regarding the church as Pneumatically formed, “If we want to find the universal church, the place to look is not upward toward the baroque movements above us but downward and outward in the attempt to grasp the meaning of the people-configuring work of the Spirit is already doing.” Lewis S. Mudge, *The Sense of a People: Toward a Church for the Human Future* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1992), 49.

6.1. Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiological framework is prototypal rather than neonatal.

There are variant views as to when evangelicalism emerged. Some would trace its emergence from Luther whose followers formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany. Other traces it from the Pietistic and Puritan⁵ movements. Still others considered evangelicalism as a North American phenomenon originating from the Awakening Movements.⁶ While others define evangelicalism as a contemporary event;⁷ and the pioneers of Contemporary Evangelicalism like Harold Okenga,⁸ Carl F. Henry,⁹ and Billy Graham considered their movement as Neo-Evangelicalism.¹⁰

Viewing the ecclesiology of evangelicalism from the point of view of its historical emergence could be confusing, because evangelicalism, in essence, is not a theological-ecclesiological construction, nor merely a reaction to a particular ecclesiological framework in the history of the church, nor simply a historical movemental event—but a process. It is a Pneumatic progressive process effecting a historically maturing movement—restorative of the prototypal ecclesial framework. Viewing evangelicalism from the viewpoints of its restorativeness and prototypality, would imply not seeing evangelicalism as a new emerging denomination but as an overall movement for the restoration of the whole Christian church.

⁵ For a collection of essays on the historical development of evangelicalism from Puritan to Postmodern contexts, see D.G. Hart, *Reckoning with the Past: Historical Essays on American Evangelicalism from the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).

⁶ Noll traces the rise of evangelicalism from the eighteenth century Awakenings, see Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*.

⁷ For an account of the British root of evangelicalism, see Graham Storey, ed, *The Evangelical and Oxford Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁸ Founding President of Fuller Theological Seminary, a leading evangelical seminary in the US.

⁹ He was a leading pioneer evangelical theologian.

¹⁰ The movement is eventually just tagged, evangelicalism.

A question might however be posed if there is indeed a perceived necessity for the restoration of the church; when churches seem settled, both in terms of institutional conviction and getting used to tradition, in their respective ecclesiological comfort zones. Each denomination seems to hold on to a particular ecclesiological feature and build their respective structures out of a piece. Such fragment-based construction is not only denominationally distinctive, but is also regarded as, not only foundational but also, “prototypal” with “prototypality” equated with a fragment rather than with a holistic framework.

Thus when an ecclesiological phenomenon emerges, it is publicly regarded as the emergence of just another denomination distinct from the already established ones. Thus traditionally, Christianity has opened itself, not only to its internal fragmentation but also, to the disintegrative historical loading and reloading of fragmentary and fragmented ecclesiological constructions. This resulted in the proliferation of various brands of competing and exclusivizing churches loading both the mission fields and the ecclesial worlds with confusions. Consequently, in the framework of denominationalistic and fragmentary Christianization of the world, the body of Christ is dragged into missional and existential irrelevance. In terms of the ratio of missional growth, the present Christianity is far beyond the ratio-impact of the prototypal apostolic church, when the Christian church was at its holistic framework of Christocentric content, biocentric missional cause, Pneumatic empowerment, and ecclesial oneness.

As in any other existence, an existence that does not fulfill its purpose disintegrates, if not vanishes, into oblivion; churches too that do not fulfill its purpose coherent with its prototypal framework would further disintegrate, if not vanishes, into

the oblivion of meaninglessness amidst the world struggling for meanings in life. This is not, however, the tragic scenario of the unexpected mega-churches whose framework is more prototypal. Common in mega-churches are the structures of Christocentric proclamation, transformational biocentric ministry, Pneumatic empowerment, and transdenominationality. And these are Contemporary Evangelicalistic structures. This reveals that the more churches become evangelicalistic, the more they become meaningful in the lives of the people, missionally prolific, and pastorally relevant.

6.2. Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiological framework is generally paradigmatic rather than separatistically organistic.

What makes Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology unique is its being a transdenominationally paradigmatic movement, rather than a separatistic denominational construction.¹¹ Thus, it is not confined in a denominational exclusion; it is inclusivistic rather exclusivistic. Although there are ecclesial entities like the Evangelical Lutheran Church or Evangelical Free Church, but evangelicalism is not confined in these entities, or in parachurch organizations. For these churches and parachurches, though could be reflective of the framework of evangelicalicity, are not confinements of evangelicalism. Moreover, to be truly evangelical, ecclesial entities should be reflective not just of an evangelical feature but of the whole prototypal framework.

Contemporary Evangelicalism found itself preeminently embodied in parachurch and other support ministries like the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 700 Club,

¹¹ As Zahl said, “Centralized church structures have never been an easy fit for evangelicals.” Paul F.M. Zahl, “Up the Creek: Paddling in the Maelstrom of the Mainline,” in *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail*, ed. George, 180.

Gaither Concerts, evangelical publishers, etc.¹² But although these organizations are not regarded as organized churches per se, but they are efficient means of accomplishing the Gospel Commission that many churches fail to do, or do not do in a primally Christocentric sense without being hindered by a calculated denominational preoccupation. Thus what could be seen in evangelical endeavors are missional operations more truly reflective of the prototypal missional endeavors—where the focus is just leading people to Christ and touching people’s lives with the love of Christ, not a calculated denominationalistic or institutionalistic preoccupation. And this is what ecclesial mission should be, Christocentric¹³ rather than ecclesiocentric. As Hanson aptly puts it:

The church’s purpose is not its own. The church is present in the world on behalf of God by whose grace it has been called into existence. Thus, at the heart of the church’s act of self-definition is a basic theological question: What is the nature of God’s presence in the world?... Where there is brokenness, loneliness, and sickness, God is present to heal.¹⁴

Mission is defined by Stott in a Christocentric sense:

The Christian church is called to mission, but there can be no mission without a message. So what is our message for the world? It centers on the cross, on the fantastic truth of a God who loves us and who gave himself for us in Christ on the cross.¹⁵

With such Christocentric missional orientation, Contemporary Evangelicals could incarnationally reach out to people without clouding the Christological soteriological

¹² From an organizational point of view evangelicalism could be defined as what McGrath sees it as “a broad term embracing a complex network of individuals, seminaries, parachurch organizations, and journals, each with a distinctive ‘take’ on what constitutes the essence of evangelical identity.” McGrath, “Evangelical Theological Method,” in *Evangelical Futures*, ed. Stackhouse, 26.

¹³ As Pinnock emphasizes, “All religions make absolute claims at some point, and Christians ought to make them in the matter of the finality of Jesus Christ.” Clark H. Pinnock, “The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World Religion,” in *Christian Faith and Practice in the World: Theology from an Evangelical Point of View*, eds. Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 155.

¹⁴ Hanson, “The Identity and Purpose of the Church,” 344.

¹⁵ Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, 82.

essence of the evangel. For as Frost and Hirsch cautioned, “incarnational mission will mean that in reaching a people group we will need to identify with them in all ways possible without compromising the truth of the gospel itself.”¹⁶ The church’s Christocentric kerygmaticity is what makes evangelical mission apparently distinctive from socio-political mission of so-called liberal churches. Thus what we have in Contemporary Evangelicalism is not a separatistic mission but a missional model of apostolic church.

Further, evangelicalism is not intended as another church separate from other churches. It is not an ecclesiological construction intended to compete with existing churches, or as an emergent new denomination. But rather it provides a model for the *re*-formation of the genuine ecclesiological structures for churches that has assimilated structures foreign to its original nature and purpose, or has been miniaturized to an ecclesial feature. Contemporary Evangelicalism provides a framework for the maturation of churches into its complete being. And with its being a regeneratively all-embracing structural paradigm, churches could be internally transformed and reconnected as one whole body of Christ; thus, an internal transdenominational reformation of the Christian church.

One of the blunders in the history of the church is the rerouting of a restorative process from its inclusive intent to an exclusive claim, due to a preconceived notion of its being a threat to, rather than a prospect for, existing ecclesial framework. The fragmentary and antagonistic reactions to the process of the evangelicalization of churches or the church as a whole, has resulted in revelational misconceptions that caused

¹⁶ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of the Things to Come*, 37.

further ecclesial polarization, amidst the supposedly bright prospects of progressive reformation. The general status and well-being of Christianity could have been different, i.e., in a more meaningful and fulfilling terms, if Christianity has been receptive to the Pneumatic evangelicalization of the church. *The mature evangelicalization with appropriate charismatism is the climactic hope of the ecclesial reformation before the eschaton.*

Contemporary Evangelicalism presents a prototypal pastoral and missional framework that present churches need to fully assimilate, because these are descriptive of the very purpose of the church. When the church loses its prototypal pastorality and missionality, it could lose its pastoral and missional election. And like Israel's loss of such election to the church, the church too might lose its election to probably a transdenominational parachurch entity. This seems a bold conjecture, but such consciousness is embodied in the notion of the falling away of churches and the recognition of the emergence of new churches regarded with more alethic integrity than the previous ones. Before the realization of such foreboding, there is a need for the churches to undergo the process of evangelicalization and mature into a prototypal ecclesiological being. When such a process becomes pervasive, the world could see a new breed of Christianity being born—an even grander and more missionally and prototypally significant Christianity—than the Reformation Era.

6.3. Contemporary Evangelicalism as a paradigm for ecclesial reformation is ecclesiologically friendly and non-threatening.

Contemporary Evangelicalism does not make void or disintegrates the essential framework of a particular church, or threatens its existence, but it is rather a model

presenting the missing ecclesiological structure/s, to allow churches to be Pneumatically regenerated into its true ecclesiological being to bring about fuller existence.¹⁷ It is not merely a sort of ecumenical movement that operates in an associational or even solely causal level. It is a regenerative framework that is intended to transform the church to what it is truly meant to be.

Its regenerative nature naturally shapes its regenerative mission, i.e., the regeneration of humanity both individually, congregationally, and even societally. In both ecclesiological ontological and functional senses it is regenerative; thus it enhances the nature and function of the church—therefore, a wholesome ecclesiological paradigm. Moreover, Contemporary Evangelical ecclesiology is holistically regenerative rather than fragmentarily accentuative.¹⁸ Contemporary Evangelicalism is preeminently known for its evangelistic crusades and parachurch ministries, however, it is not merely a movement accentuating crusades and “parachurchism,” for it is a balanced framework of holistic ecclesiological nature and function. *Its missional structure coheres with its theological structures, its conceptual mold is verified by its biocentric consistency,¹⁹ and its Christological content is empowered by Pneumatic operation.²⁰*

Contemporary Evangelicalism is not fragmentarily accentuative because it does

¹⁷ Fahlbusch remarks, “In view of the ambivalence of the phenomenon [of the church], a relevant ecclesiology must present both the dogmatically normative premise and the empirical reality in a way that allows us to explain the conditions leading to the distinctive phenomena and to make intelligible the legitimacy and reality of the actual forms.” Erwin Fahlbusch, “Church: Subject, Tasks, and Problems of Ecclesiology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*.

¹⁸ Bloesch comments, “A viable doctrine of the church for our time will involve us in a passionate concern for church unity.” Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity*, 129. Evangelicalism, however, goes beyond a mere external ecumenical approach; it rather presents an internal framework for the regeneration of ecclesial wholeness.

¹⁹ Thus an emphasis on living what is being preached, or “walking the talk.”

²⁰ Thus there is the emphasis on prayers and the role of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of Christ.

not emphasize a particular ecclesiological feature as an overarching ecclesiology as traditionally common. For example a mystical church is such, because of its overarching emphasis on the ontological mysticity of the church. So is a liturgical church because of an overarching emphasis on liturgy; or a charismatic church because of the overarching emphasis on spiritual gifts. All these result in ecclesiologies which may seem whole but actually, merely an outgrowth from a fragment. Such an outgrowth ecclesiology at times is invocative of the concept of being as ecclesial remnant. However, the Biblical concept of remnant ecclesiology is not an ecclesiology born out of a fragment, but rather an ecclesiology that remains in its holistic integrity amidst the context of theological and spiritual disintegrations. Thus a true remnant ecclesiology is not a fragmented or propagating fragmentation, but holistically archetypal promoting ecclesiological holism.

Contemporary Evangelicalism is a non-separatistic and non-denominationalistic ecclesiology, as aforementioned in the preceding Part, there could be a realization of Contemporary Evangelicalism in Catholics,²¹ Protestants, Pentecostals, Orthodox, and Inter/Non-Denominationalists.²² Why? Because it is not intended as another ecclesiological construction amidst numerous ecclesiologies, but it is even a synthesizing paradigm for churches to discover what ecclesiological structure they are missing; then allow the process of evangelicalization to transform them into whole new churches, and consequently transforming the aggrupations of Christians into a whole new church.

²¹ For a brief exploration on Evangelical-Catholic dialogue, see J. Augustine DiNoia, “The Church in the Gospel: Catholics and Evangelicals in Conversation,” *Pro Ecclesia* 13 (Spring 2004): 58-69. For further study, see Thomas P. Rausch, ed., *Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They share a Common Future?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

²² For a discussion on varieties of American evangelicalism, see Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnson, *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1999).

Evangelicalism is not intended as a movement antagonistic of other churches; but is even unitive, as seen in evangelistic crusades, parachurch ministries, retreats, conferences, or even mass moral reactions, where churches are drawn together in fulfilling the common Christian mission.²³

6.4. Conclusion

To synthesize, Contemporary Evangelicalism presents a paradigm offering bright prospects for the Christian church. However, it is not merely an artificial or superficial ecclesiological paradigm, nor merely a reactionary movement. Beyond its paradigmatic and movemental features, it is indeed, as aforementioned in the preceding Part, the Pneumatic operation in restoring the church back to its original nature. Like humanity that fell due to accommodation of sin, the church too had fallen due to assimilation of things foreign to its essential nature. And like humanity in the process of regeneration in Christ through the Holy Spirit; churches in particular and the church in general could also experience regeneration of its ideal nature in Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And very essential among churches today, as it was after apostolic times, is the restoration of its Christocentric core and missional preoccupation through Pneumatic empowerment. The process of the restoration of the church is the intended evangelicalistic *telus* that has yet to be discovered and explored.

There is a need for the churches within Christianity, to undergo the process of evangelicalization, so that internally, Christianity will have one whole church, without

²³ This is descriptive even of the early stage of evangelicalism. Noll points out, “The dynamism of evangelicalism [eighteenth century] was revealed most clearly in its missional activity.” Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 256.

disintegrating the existence of churches but, profoundly transforming them into one wholesome interconnected body of Christ. And such interconnection is not just superficial or organizational but theological and spiritual, ecclesiological and Christological, functional and Pneumatic—thus an ontological regeneration of the Christian church. This recreates a new era of Christianity, a new dimension in Christian life, and a fresh vision and zeal for the fulfillment of the Gospel Commission.

CHAPTER 7

WHY THE NEED FOR NEW REFORMATION?

Why the need for New Reformation? Because the Reformation sparked through Luther was not the culmination of ecclesial reformation, but rather the beginning of a long process finally maturing in the present time in Contemporary Evangelicalism. However, like its embryonic stage, its maturation too has not been properly regarded; the Christian church in general has missed the profound intent of the former and could also be missing the latter. When this happens, the bright prospects of established churches to be internally integral of one whole *ekklesia* of Christ would continue to be marred by ecclesiologically ontological, functional, and semiotic disintegrations until probably a new form of ecclesial entity would emerge.

In fact, the emergence of charismatic evangelical mega-churches is indicative not merely of sociological trend but profoundly, of the spiritual, missional and pastoral significance of non-traditional ecclesial entities that are more structurally prototypal than the established churches. The inherent structures of Christocentric content, biocentric missional focus, Pneumatic empowerment and transdenominationality—structures which are prototypal—are what make this mega ecclesial entities naturally prolific. These

entities are not only adapting prototypal structures, but, at the outset, are born with prototypal inherence that spontaneously matures along the way; in contrast to institutionalized churches whose characterization is constructed on a theological-ecclesiological fragment consequential of a theological-ecclesiological reaction, or self-forming conceptual assertion. Although church growth among institutionalized and established churches in South America, Asia, and Africa could not be generally denied, but such growth are not independent of assimilated evangelicalistic structures. Those churches grow because they learn to adapt evangelicalistic ecclesiological structures, missionally and pastorally, spiritually and theologically. People in the mission field just do not come to church per se, not until the church comes to them; although most likely, people who are fundamentally traditional are the ones who come to church as a perpetuation of their generational religious tradition. There is a dire need for established churches to be more truly evangelicalistically active. For such characteristic is essentially that of a more truly reformed church.

Thus in all these, there are profound rationales for the New Reformation of churches in particular and, eventually, the New Reformation of the one whole Christian church in general. The following are the five rationales with profound ecclesiological implications.

7.1. The 1517 Reformation was embryonic rather than terminal.

The Reformation sparked by Luther, followed by other Reformers, was intended to bring back the evangelical consciousness to the psyche of the church. It was intended to reform the deformed ergonistic soteriological structure of Christian faith to a fidestic

soteriological structure; and also to reform the extra-biblical epistemology to biblical epistemology. But it was not yet a missional movement, nor was emphatic of Pneumatic empowerment both individually and ecclesially. Further, although there was a sense of faith but, in itself, the fidestic structure was not yet biocentrically converte. There was still no emphasis on active individual salvific and pragmatic conversion, although there was a converte theological element. In fact it was more of a theological movement rather than an ecclesial movement per se. The concern was the reformation of what had been perceived as a deformed theological structure in Christianity. It could even be viably assumed that there was even no intention to bring about a unitive transdenominationality within the body of Christ. There was, of course, a theological construction on the concept of the universal invisible church, but the transdenominationality was conceptual, rather than missional and pastoral, pragmatic and utilitarian. It could also be viably assumed that the focus of Reformation may not even be the one whole Christian church, but the Western Church without emphatic and obvious inclusion of the Eastern or Coptic Churches.

In the contemporary maturation of evangelicalism could be seen a paradigm of reforming the framework of the church back to its whole prototypal being. The preceding Chapter describing the framework of Contemporary Evangelicalism is conclusive of this holistic orientation. And being indicative of the whole structure of the prototypal nature and purpose of *ekklesia*, *Contemporary Evangelicalism could be regarded as terminal, i.e., the full-grown of the Pneumatic process of restoring the church back to its prototypal nature, purpose, and function*. However, being terminal, it also poses the risk of losing

meaningful ecclesial life when its framework is not regeneratively assimilated into fragmentary and fragmented ecclesial existence and life.

The embryonicity of the 1517 Reformation and the terminalicity of Contemporary Evangelicalism necessitate a New Reformation. And this is a serious ecclesiological necessity requiring openness and wholehearted reception to the Pneumatic operation in the history of the church. As Hodgson emphasizes, “no viable ecclesiology can surrender the conviction that the church is the continuous creative and redemptive work of God, who indwells and empowers it as Holy Spirit.”¹ Berkhof also sees the dynamicity of ecclesial existence:

The fact of being church is thus not something static, it is a prototypal movement, a bridge-event. Therefore as it moves along it is itself continually changing.²

*The church could not continue to exist and live in its fragmentary and fragmented existence and life, for this could consequently result, not only in its missional breakdown but also, in its existential meaninglessness.*³ There is a serious need for churches to get over with their respective exclusion and be internally drawn together into one whole *ekklesia*. As Roof cautions:

...adopting narrow, sectarian notions of the church and ourselves would be alien to our theological heritage and our commitment to be a public church. Historically our churches have been “bridging institution” concerned with bringing all of life into some meaningful whole.⁴

The fact that the contemporary church is now being further fragmented, not only by theological issues but also by present moral issues, is descriptive of the further

¹ Hodgson, “Ecclesia of Freedom,” 225.

² Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of Faith*, trans. Sherd Woodstra, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 415. The change, however, should be regarded as a change of form rather than of essence.

³ That is the meaningless of its existence.

⁴ Roof, “The Church in Centrifuge,” 1012.

disintegration of the church's holistically unitive structure. To say that the one Christ of Christianity has divergent conflicting faith structures is both ironical and polarizing. Although it could be argued that the existence of varied cultural or historical forms situating ecclesial life presupposes ecclesiological diversities. However, if such cultural or historical forms become the essences of ecclesial entities, then such ecclesial entities are substituting its essential being with incidental factors. Further, ecclesiological constructions based on solely historical revelatory moment is fragmentary, for such historical revelatory moment should be regarded as part of the continuous process of restoring the church back to its wholeness, not a particular ground for outgrowth-based ecclesiological construction.

Such irony puts at risk the testimonial and kerygmatic integrity of the one whole church. And this polarity further fragments the one body of Christ. With an ironical testimony and kerygma, and a polarized inter-ecclesial relationship amidst a missional field that has grown by billions, pose a serious question about the church's fulfillment of the Great Commission. It is not implied here that the conversion of the global society is dependent on the regeneration of the church into wholeness. But the wholeness of the church would enable the church to confront, more qualitatively and quantitatively, the serious missional and pastoral challenges pose by a secular and spiritually broken world to the church. As the Confessing Theologians Commission declares:

In the absence of faithful Christian witness, society establishes false idols....consumerism, materialism, individualism, and hedonism rush in to fill the void....a renewed church will reform public life.⁵

⁵ The Confessing Theologians Commission, "Be Stedfast: A Letter to Confessing Christians," in *Pilgrims in the Sawdust Trail*, ed. George, 210.

If the Christian church still believes on the primality of Christ, the indispensability of the Holy Spirit, missional cause, and its transdenominationality being the one body of Christ—then it should, by all means, undergo a New Reformation in the paradigm of the full-grown Contemporary Evangelicalism.

7.2. The Reformation consequence was separatistic rather than restorative.

The Reformation started in the 1517 and subsequent ecclesiological movements were not restoratively assimilated into the structures of the then existing churches, but were rather regarded as antagonistic reactionary movements that should be eschewed rather than generally adapted. Such an ecclesial disposition had led to the formation of churches embodying, not the whole of prototypal framework but, an ecclesiological revelatory aspects in opposition to other existing churches that were supposed to embody such aspect weak or lacking in their ecclesial life framework.

Thus every ecclesiological revelatory aspect would have its corresponding denominational formation. These denominations are actually ecclesial outgrowth, grounded on a fragment. Thus, instead of the realization of a progressive restoration of the church back to its prototypal framework, the consequence is the proliferation of separatistic ecclesiological constructions within the supposed to be one whole body. Instead of restoring the church into wholeness, there are consequential polarizing divisions. As Braten perceives it, “We have live in strange paradoxical situation in which Protestants have been trying to have the gospel and its freedom without the church and its structure and the Catholics have been trying to have a church with superabundance of

structure without the gospel.”⁶ Thus the irony of ecclesial renewal and decline, rather than a progressive regeneration of the church.⁷

What is meant here is not that amidst cultural and geographical factors, there should only be one uni-formed church, but that amidst cultural and geographical diversities, the church still remained essentially whole and one. Thus one in essence, though may be superficially diverse. Prototypal ecclesiological restoration does not preclude mitotic ecclesial growth, but that the mitosis is still within the framework of the progressive holistic growth of the church.

To recall the preceding Part I, if the emergence of ecclesiological revelatory movements would have been synthesized in the nature and function of all churches, Christianity could have experienced an astounding regeneration of the one whole Christian church. *From Luther’s Reformation—the restoration of faith and the Bible; from Pietism and Puritanism—a Spirit-filled devotional life; from the Awakenings—the missional cause; then finally from Contemporary Evangelicalism—the full-grown structure of Christocentricity, Pneumaticity, convertive biocentricity, Bibliocentricity, unitive transdenominationality, and missional emphasis. With the synthesis of all the essentials, the church could have been more like the body of Christ, more like the one called out to fulfill the Gospel Commission.* But what happened in all these stages of

⁶ Carl E. Braten, *Mother Church: Ecclesiology and Ecumenism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998). 17.

⁷ Fraser even sees the need for the revival and reformation of evangelicalism, which is supposed to be a revival and reformation movement, “Short of revival and reformation...are likely to prevent evangelicalism from making a constructive and enduring response to the present moment.” Os Guinness, “The American Hour: The Evangelical Movement,” in *Evangelicalism*, ed. Fraser, 197. Nettles sees the necessity of both revival and reformation. He comments, “love and marriage go together” thus so “it is with revival and reformation; when individuals pursue one without proper appreciation for and attention to the other, the result can be very ugly.” Tom Nettles, “A Better Way: Church Growth Through Revival ad Reformation,” in *Power Religion*, ed. Horton, 161.

revelation was that an aspect of the whole was absolutized, institutionalized and eccentricized.

Evans criticizes:

If the ecclesiologies of history have all contained truths, if they describe the same Church, they must cohere. The ecumenical task is to discern their coherence.⁸

However, the ecclesial predicament may not be so much in the discovery of their conceptual coherence for the Pneumatically operated ecclesiological revelation in the history of the church does cohere. It is, however, the coherence of ecclesial attitudes toward progressive Pneumatic operation in the history of the church that need to be discovered. It is the fragmentary approach to ecclesial formation that propagates incoherence, i.e., incoherence in assimilating and embodying the holistic framework of ecclesiological revelations. What the churches needed to be transformed into a whole church, is openness and wholehearted assimilation of holistic ecclesiological framework.

However, this holistic restorative scenario has never been realized yet. And Contemporary Evangelicalism has resorted to parachurch ministries, or ecclesiological category in contrast to Catholicism, Orthodox, Anglicanism, or even Pentecostalism, or a generic ecclesiological categorization of Christian conservatism in contrast to Christian liberalism within ecclesial entities. Churches in general, preoccupied with their respective “identity-centricities,” are hesitant, if not bureaucratically constraint, to assimilate the whole prototypal structures. Mudge expresses regrets, “The opportunity sacramentally to signify God’s gathering of the people of earth into a blessed community

⁸ Evans, *The Church and the Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4.

is severely compromised by the inability of Christian communions to surmount the ecclesiastical barriers that separate them.”⁹

At the outset, of course, the sense of self-sufficiency in every ecclesial entity hinders the cumulative ecclesiological regeneration. Wolf reminds that, “no ecclesiology can proceed in self-satisfied isolation.”¹⁰ Thus what we have in Christianity are accidental churches, rather than one archetypal church situated in different cultural or geographical settings. Because of this situation, the history of Christian church is a history of fragmentation and separationism rather than a progressively restorative synthesis. This ecclesial landscape necessitates New Reformation that is regenerative of the archetypal nature of the whole ecclesial body.

7.3. Christianity is still very denominationalistic rather than unitive.

Christianity is still entrapped in denominational institutionalism, although not as entrapped as before. And Riddel poses this warning:

God will not be contained. The attempt to construct boxes for the divine presence is doomed to tragedy.¹¹

Even at the onset of Contemporary Evangelicalism, denominational separatism tied up to denominational institutionalism, was still obvious. At the early days of the Billy Graham crusades, there was even a very negative attitude by other church leaders against the involvement of other churches in common evangelistic cause. But subsequently

⁹ Lewis S. Mudge, *The Church as a Moral Community: Ecclesiology and Ethics in Ecumenical Debate* (New York: Continuum), 120. However, he speaks of this in the context of “solidarity with the suffering world.” Ibid.

¹⁰ Wolf, *After Our Likeness*, 19.

¹¹ Michael Riddel, *Threshold of the Future: Reforming the Church in the post-Christian West* (London: SPCK, 1998), 174. See this book for challenges on the new reformation.

denominational barriers began dissipating, and presently greater interdenominational relationship could be seen. From scholarly societies, to missions, to crusades, to retreats and conferences, to ministerial associations, to councils or associations of churches, to academe could be seen greater ecclesial interrelationship. Even theological conferences are getting inter-ecclesial as in the 2005 joint conference of the Society for the Study of Theology (Protestant) and the Irish Theological Association (Catholic).

However, in spite of the pervasiveness of interdenominational relationship, the church still is in quest for deeper “ecumenicity,” that may not even be tagged ecumenical according to the present orientation of ecumenism. This is so because organic ecumenicity¹² will find great difficulty amidst individualized denominational identity. Each denomination naturally clings on to their respective distinctions. Thus, while joint endeavors are getting common, yet preservation of denominational distinctions is still perpetuated. This is so because such distinctions are regarded as unique ecclesiological hallmarks, indicating that the hallmarks of Christian churches are both divergent and contrasting. In this context, denominational identities could be hardly unifying and synthesizing. It is so because the usual approach to unifying the body of Christ is external rather than internal. It is like trying to unify human society under one government amidst cultural, geographical and political diversities.

Mudge however proposes what could be seen as an approach deeper than the

¹² What is meant here is an effort to organize churches into one umbrella organization that would be determinative of denominational members' ecclesiological structure, in spite of a variety of forms. In regards to ecumenicity, Rose in the late 60's, proposes a concept of decentralized church structure that would "be formed the cells of the coming ecumenopolis" where ecumenicity is horizontal and ministerially cooperative. Stephen C. Rose "Shape and Style of the Church Tomorrow," *Theology Today* 25 (April 1968): 77. An internally regenerative process, however, could even be more viable and profoundly prospective than an organizational or associational approach.

usual organizational structural ecumenism or cause-oriented associational approach. He suggests, “The need today could be to reconstruct different visions of church-in-world not as new ‘denominations’ but as varieties of spiritual-moral practice lifting up different concerns with the communion of one church.”¹³ This proposal, however, is still fragmentary and could be considered as assuming that the church has diverse forms of spiritual-moral ministries. And indeed the church has evolved into complex societal institution with complex educational, medical, humanitarian, social, and media roles. The church has become more complex in form than the prototypal *ekklesia*. However, the church should not forget that these roles are simply corollary to its most essential kerygmatic role. And should societal culture or a particular role become the distinguishing mark of ecclesial entities—the church becomes either merely a culturalized or institutionalized entity rather than the *ekklesia* of Christ itself.

However, in Contemporary Evangelicalism, could be seen an internal approach to unifying the churches of Christ. It is a viable paradigm because it is not external or merely organic nor associational, but theologically and ecclesiologically ontological. It is meant to transform the very nature of the churches into something archetypal, so that by its internal transformation, they would all be regenerated into one whole Christian church. When churches are regenerated into their respective whole archetypal nature, their nature becomes one; thus one ecclesial nature in spite of a variety of forms. Churches then are internally and spiritually knitted together as one people of God, not divergent and conflicting peoples of God. This oneness as people of God is proleptic of the oneness of the redeemed people of God in the *eschaton*. The church eschatological prolepticity

¹³ Mudge, *The Church as a Moral Community*, 122.

necessitates a unitive and synthesizing New Reformation.

7.4. Ecclesiology is still fragmentary rather than unitive.

Although there is a present recognition of ecclesiological metaphoricality in established ecclesiologies, yet such metaphorical recognition is still overshadowed by assertive disposition on denominational ecclesiological essentiality tending towards an ironical absolutism. It is ironical because while there is an almost getting prevalent recognition of the viability of other ecclesiologies, denominationalistic metaphorically-based ecclesiologies are still prevalently respectively asserted as *the* ecclesiology among ecclesiologies. Thus we have Catholic ecclesiology, Protestant ecclesiology, Pentecostal ecclesiology, Orthodox ecclesiology, Nondenominational or Interdenominational ecclesiology—who, while now beginning to recognize the probable validity of one another on grounds of being variant ecclesiological models, are still assertive of their respective ecclesiology as paradigmatic.

There is still the absence of prevalent acceptability to assimilate the whole prototypal structures. In fact the lacking or weak prototypal structure/s are, at times, avoided because of apprehension that this/these could be antagonistic to, if not threatening denominationalistic identity, characterized as unique. This misconceived, if not preconceived, notion creates a theological ambiance that results in fragmentary ecclesiology. Thus individualized ecclesiology remains an outgrowth from an ecclesiological aspect from which a corresponding ecclesiological model is formulated resulting in separatistic ecclesiological construction. And, at times, separatistic ecclesiological constructions are justified on the grounds of the concept of diversity in the

body of Christ. But it should be noted that diversity in the body of Christ is not an ecclesial or ecclesiological diversity, but rather a charismatic diversity, i.e., diversity of gifts for the accomplishment of the different ministries of the one body of Christ. Thus, there is a need for the reformation of churches to become more truly prototypal rather than more denominationalistic.

Even the usual approach to ecumenical movement that aims to unite churches together is still a circumstantial, rather than archetypal, approach. That is, it attempts to unite churches together in the framework of confronting the common particular circumstance in societal life, as churches of different traditions. It starts from the proposition that churches are really diverse but could be one in cause. Thus a causal approach rather than profoundly ontological. Yes, it could be argued that causal approach is realistic than a more idealistic approach. But the archetypal approach places the church in the context of the whole salvation history. Humanity is archetypally intended as one people of God. Because of the Fall, humanity has become diversely separatistic.¹⁴ Yet, humanity is still of one essence, and in spite of its superficial diversities, is still intended as one restored, reconciled, and completely regenerated one people of God in the *eschaton*. It is this wider soterio-eschatological perspective that ecclesiology should cohere, being the pastoral, missional and symbolic entity of one humanity in God.

In terms of the need for integrative spirituality Riddle pose this challenge:

Life is already split and fragmented, and many people feel the lack of a sustaining center to existence. A spirituality adequate to the missiological task will be one which is integrating and holistic. In the development of New Testament Christology, the drama of the Christ-event reaches cosmological proportions (Colossians 1.15-20, Ephesians 1.3-14). In doing so its binds together creation and redemption so that the purpose of God and the meaning of human

¹⁴ As Davis emphasizes, “We need renewal, reform, and revival because we live in the midst of the fallout of the Fall.” Davis, “Who Is the Holy Spirit Today?,” in *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail*, ed. George, 93.

existence are united. Contemporary Christian spirituality will need to rediscover the emphasis, and move toward bringing together disparate elements of faith and experience.¹⁵

In its nature and purpose, the *ekklesia* of God is one. Divergent ecclesiological natures and purposes are disintegrative of this essential oneness. Thus there could be no two or more churches of Christ but only one. And in the context of ecclesial fall into fragmentation and separatism, unitive regeneration could not be viably approach externally but internally. The external associational or conciliar approach to uniting the body of Christ could just provide a framework for occasional common endeavors while still perpetuating recognition of theological-ecclesiological distinctions.

However, when churches assimilate the whole internal prototypal ecclesiological structures, then churches will be regenerated into one *ekklesia* of God. *When churches within Christianity becomes Christocentric, Pneumatic, Bibliocentric, biocentrically missional, and transdenominational—their internal commonality will naturally result in profound ontological, relational, and functional unity and oneness.*¹⁶

7.5. The church is now more eschatological than ever.¹⁷

The destiny of the church is not in itself. When the church has become regarded

¹⁵ Riddel, *Threshold of the Future*, 133.

¹⁶ Flew perceived a growing conviction in the late 30's for the church to be what it was meant to be, "The conviction is growing that the need of Christian people is a fresh vision of the Church of Christ as God meant it to be, His own creation, the instrument of His age-long purpose, the reconciling Body in which all mankind might meet in a worship and service which would extend to the farthest boundaries of human life." R. Newton Flew, *Jesus and His Church: A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1960), 12.

¹⁷ Stackhouse and colleagues characterize the urgency of situating the church, "Christian churches face a new global situation full of promise and peril. Led by new developments in economics, technology, and media, by wider and more direct contact between the world and religion, and by a wider consensus about human rights, ecological dangers, and the costs of war, new institutional and social practices are emerging on all sides." Max L. Stackhouse, Tim Dearborn, and Scott Paeth, eds. *The Local Church in a Global Era: Reflections for a New Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

as the eschatological *telus*, then it begins to confine its life in self-absorption.¹⁸ And as such, it begins to construct ideological grounds for its salvific claims, and this self-claim would eventually result in the humanistic transformation of the church. The institution of the church then becomes the center of life, diverting attention from Christ and his kingdom. Faith then becomes institutionalistic and traditionalistic;¹⁹ both individual and congregational believers become settled within the walls of ecclesial institution. This ecclesial life situation could result in, either the disfranchisement of eschatological expectations, or the disfranchisement of regenerative necessity symptomatic of false self-claim of eschatological surety.²⁰ In this sense the church becomes lost en route to its eschatological journey, if not abandon its eschatological journey altogether. It becomes just like one of the human institutions, and may even be worse because it could de dogmatic while being a split-level polarized institution. This is the risk that confronts the church when it losses its appropriate eschatological framework.

In regards to institutionalization Snyder warns:

Institutionalization is cumulative....institutionalization will in time become deadening. Unless periodically reversed by institutional renewal, institutionalization will spell spiritual death for any church or movement.²¹

However, again, if the church is viewed merely as an institution, institutional renewal may not even be enough to sustain its spiritual life. But if the church is viewed in its

¹⁸ Hanson warns against “thinly veiled program of self-aggrandizement” and challenges to lay “aside all triumphalism and placing not its own needs but the needs of the world at the forefront.” Hanson, “The Identity and Purpose of the Church,” 346.

¹⁹ Abraham criticizes, “Within Christianity, commitment to tradition is often seen as the great obstacle to progress in ecumenism.” Abraham, *The Coming Great Revival*, 2.

²⁰ Phillips and Okholm remind that, “the church has no power in and of itself, but only that mediated by Christ. The church will not bring in the consummated kingdom. That is Christ’s own work.” Phillips and Okholm, *A Family of Faith*, 120.

²¹ Snyder, *The Community of the King*, 64.

deeper ontological sense, its being could be spiritually renewed—then vibrant ecclesial life would just sustainably ensue.

Moreover, the church to be ever meaningful and significant, should not loss its appropriate place in the continuum of salvation history. And its appropriate place is its being the missional and pastoral means for guiding humanity in their spiritual journey to the kingdom. And the nearer the kingdom is coming, the fuller it should accomplish its purpose. When the church remains stagnant while the kingdom is coming, it loses its existential meanings and missional relevance.

The 1517 Reformation was reactionary of the fall of the church. However, since Reformation, the Christian church still remains fragmented and ecclesiologically fragmentary. The nearness of the present time to the *eschaton*, necessitates serious considerations for churches to get-over with their respective fragmentary eccentricities,²² and allow the Pneumatic operation to transform them into prototypal ecclesial entities—fulfilling the Gospel Commission in anticipation of the soon *parousia*. When the church loses its sense of immediacy and urgency, it remains on its comfort zones stiffened by traditions. Then it loses its evangelicity, and ironically redefines even the evangel in terms of its denominationalistic suppositions. Bauder warns:

When you lose the ability to define the evangel, you lose the ability to define evangelicalism. More than that, you lose the ability to define Christianity.²³

However, when the church sense of immediacy and urgency is indeed awakened, then it

²² Knippers foresees, “I do not think the shape of the future church will be the bureaucratic, politicized, modernist denominations of the twentieth century. In fact, I believe the church will be mature and diverse, ecumenical, theologically grounded, capable of addressing major ethical issues, and global, and it will be shaped and lived by the next generation.” Diane Knippers, “God Is Working among Us,” in *Pilgrims in the Sawdust Trail*, ed. George, 195.

²³ Kevin T. Bauder, “What’s That You Smell?: A Fundamental Response to *The Smell of Sawdust*,” in *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail*, ed. George, 66.

becomes open and receptive to the historical Pneumatic restorative operations. It allows and imbibes the re-formation of the whole archetypal structures into its ecclesial being—transforming its ecclesiality into the nature and being more truly reflective of the Christocentric Pneumatically empowered *ekklesia*.

This is not intended as an eschatological paper, but suffice it to say that, if churches are to fulfill the Great Commission there could be no other time necessitating the transformation of churches into their whole prototypal framework than now. It could be conjectural to foresee the termination of the missional and pastoral election of the present ecclesial form because of failure in fulfilling its purpose due to being stunted by denominationalistic self-centeredness; however, the termination of the missional and pastoral election of the Old Testament ecclesial entity due to its vocational failure does pose a considerable probability. As could be seen now, parachurch and transdenominational ministry endeavors are proving themselves more productive than a merely denominational effort. These parachurches and transdenominational ministries, at times, still do have church connections; but will time come when because of the ontological and functional failures of established churches, that these ministries will become fully independent and in themselves the embodiment of the new missional and pastoral entities Pneumatically elected and empowered? And the established churches are left in oblivion?

With the urgency of humanity's need to be prepared for the *parousia*, churches should now be seriously reflective of becoming more truly the *ekklesia* that Christ meant them to be, and the Holy Spirit intended to empower. If ever there is an immediate and

urgent need for the New Reformation of the Christian church, it is now.²⁴ Why? *First*, we now have full-grown prototypal ecclesiological structures in the paradigm of Contemporary Evangelicalism. And *second*, the present time has become even more dynamic, unpredictable, and eschatological. The world is beset by more and more crisis amidst false hopes on human capabilities. From moral confusions, even within Christianity, to the fears of global warming, tsunami, terrorism, asteroids, new forms of diseases—the world needs more than ever a greater sense of profound hope. And there could be no more profoundly meaningful hope than the Christological hope. And there is yet no suitable instrument of hope than the church.

Riddle poses this serious and profound challenge:

The church in the West is in the early stages of a massive reformation. Out in the frontiers there are pioneers of the faith, already engaging with the emerging culture.... But it is not enough for a few radicals to lead the way. The great mass of the Western church must shift.... In the process, some Christian resources will have to be reassessed. Scripture will remain central, but the way it is processed and appropriated may need to change. Holiness, worship, spirituality, conversion, evangelism and the shape of the church will be revisited. Radical surgery is more traumatic than minor surgery. It requires careful preparations, skillful intervention and extensive aftercare. But as long as it is the Spirit guiding the process, and not a self-selected group who “know what’s right” for the church, we may retain confidence in the long-term prognosis.²⁵

But will churches allow themselves to be regenerated into one whole *ekklesia* that is more truly instrumental of the Christological hope? Or will they ignore the call for the New Reformation, and just disregard the meanings and implications of the Pneumatological phenomenon of Contemporary Evangelicalism? The answer will be

²⁴ Hall sees the need for renewal at congregational level. He writes, “Unless there is a radical theological renewal affecting the Protestant denominations at the congregational level, the remnants of classical Protestantism in North American will not survive the twenty-first century.” Douglas John Hall, “The Future of Protestantism in North American,” *Theology Today* 52 (January 1996): 458-465.

²⁵ Riddel, *Threshold of the Future*, 173-174.

descriptive of the deepness of their respective absorption of denominational eccentricities, and will be predictive of their respective pastoral and missional electionary destinies.

To close with Riddel’s words, “Only in the relinquishing of self-assurance, pride and confidence will there be humility to learn from the Spirit.”²⁶

7.6. Conclusion

The 1517 Reformation was embryonic, and the restorative ecclesial process has been progressing since then. In Contemporary Evangelicalism could be seen the paradigm of the full-grown process of ecclesial reformation. It is revelatory of the Pneumatic operation of restoring the church back to its prototypal structures. The emergence of Contemporary Evangelicalism is an urgent call for the New Reformation of churches into one whole *ekklesia* of Christ—into one regenerated people of God fulfilling their vocational purpose en route to the kingdom of God.

Logan poses this challenge too:

The need to renew the Christian ideal, to reaffirm the essential meaning of Christianity, to revive the human spirit by a return to the pristine elements of Christian living was not limited to any one period in history and was as old as Pentecost and the early church.²⁷

And now—with the emergence of an apparent paradigm of Contemporary Evangelicalism for global ecclesial regeneration amidst the urgency of the present time—the time is ripe for the New Reformation! And imagine—the Christian church actually going back to its pristine state and prolificacy...

²⁶ Ibid., 172.

²⁷ F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2002), 105.