

**A STUDY OF GEORGE A. LINDBECK'S  
ECCLESIOLOGY AND ITS ETHICAL  
IMPLICATIONS: A REFORMED ASSESSMENT**

By

**JUNSEOP KIM  
(u28526202)**

**Dissertation**

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree:

**Philosophiae Doctor**

Department of Dogmatics & Christian Ethics  
In the Faculty of Theology  
University of Pretoria

**Supervisor: Prof. Daniël P. Veldsman**

August 2017

# DECLARATION

I, Junseop Kim, declare that the thesis, "A Study of George A. Lindbeck's Ecclesiology and Its Ethical Implications: A Reformed Assessment," which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Dogmatics and Christian Ethics at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

FULL NAME: JUNSEOP KIM

SIGNATURE: 

DATE: **AUGUST 2017**

# Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	vii
<b>KEY WORDS</b> .....	i x

## **Chapter 1. Introduction ..... 1**

1.1 The statement of the problem .....	1
1.2 The purpose of study .....	4
1.3 The limitation of study .....	6
1.4 Method: literature study .....	7
1.5 A preview of each chapter .....	8

## **Chapter 2. A Survey of Recent Studies on Lindbeck ..... 9**

2.1 A survey of recent studies on Lindbeck .....	9
2.1.1 In the light of the philosophy of religion.....	9
2.1.2 In the light of religious pluralism .....	12
2.1.3 In the light of religious epistemology .....	15
2.1.4 In the light of religious realism.....	20
2.1.5 In the light of the relation between George A. Lindbeck and Karl Barth, especially in terms of intratextuality.....	26
2.1.6 In the light of pragmatism.....	31
2.1.7 In the light of public ethics.....	37
2.2 An evaluation of recent studies on Lindbeck.....	40

## **Chapter 3. A Quest for the Hermeneutical Core of Lindbeck's Theology (1): an Examination of Lindbeck's Doctrinal Concern .....42**

<b>3.1 The hypothesis.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.2 Substantiating the hypothesis.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.3 An examination and evaluation of a possible rival to Lindbeck’s ecclesiastical concern.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>3.3.1 A description of Lindbeck’s doctrinal concern.....</b>	<b>43</b>
3.3.1.1 A significant feature of Lindbeck’s doctrinal concern: the inseparableness of a doctrinal concern from a religious concern.....	43
3.3.1.2 A sketch of Lindbeck’s view of doctrine.....	45
<b>3.3.2 The influence of Lindbeck’s doctrinal concern on two subsequent theological studies on doctrine.....</b>	<b>50</b>
3.3.2.1 The influence of Lindbeck on McGrath (1990) .....	50
<b>3.3.2.1.1 An analysis of McGrath (1990).....</b>	<b>50</b>
3.3.2.1.1.1 The structure and the theological significances of McGrath (1990).....	50
3.3.2.1.1.2 McGrath’s primary concern which is found in <i>The Genesis of Doctrine</i> .....	51
3.3.2.1.1.3 McGrath’s view of doctrine which is expressed in <i>The Genesis of Doctrine</i> .....	52
<b>3.3.2.1.2 McGrath’s assessment of Lindbeck’s view of doctrine .....</b>	<b>58</b>
3.3.2.2 The influences of Lindbeck on Vanhoozer (2005) .....	59
<b>3.3.2.2.1 An analysis of Vanhoozer (2005).....</b>	<b>59</b>
3.3.2.2.1.1 The significance of Vanhoozer (2005): a postconservative, canonical-linguistic attempt to overcome Lindbeck (1984) .....	59
3.3.2.2.1.2 Vanhoozer’s view of doctrine which is found in <i>The Drama of Doctrine</i> .....	60
<b>3.3.2.2.2 Vanhoozer’s assessment of Lindbeck’s view of doctrine ....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>3.3.3 An assessment of the attempt to consider Lindbeck’s doctrinal concern as the hermeneutical core of his theology .....</b>	<b>64</b>
 <b>Chapter 4. A Quest for the Hermeneutical Core of Lindbeck’s Theology (2): an Examination of Lindbeck’s Ecclesiastical Concern.....</b>	 <b>68</b>

<b>4.1 Internal evidence .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>4.1.1 The first period: preparation for an ecumenical journey.....</b>	<b>69</b>
4.1.1.1 His childhood in China: an experience of interdenominationalism.....	70
4.1.1.2 His college time in U.S.: his interest in Roman Catholicism.....	73
<b>4.1.2 The second period: his ecumenical journey in Paris .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>4.1.3 The third period: his ecumenical journey in Rome.....</b>	<b>78</b>
4.1.3.1 The preconciliar stage of this period .....	78
4.1.3.2 The Second Vatican Council.....	81
4.1.3.3 The postconciliar stage of this period .....	83
<b>4.1.4 A conclusion from internal evidence.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>4.2 External evidence.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>4.2.1 An ecclesiastical concern as a common agenda of theologians relating to Lindbeck.....</b>	<b>90</b>
4.2.1.1 An ecclesiastical concern of theologians who had an influence on Lindbeck.....	90
<b>4.2.1.1.1 Hans W. Frei and his ecclesiastical concern .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>4.2.1.1.2 Paul L. Holmer and his ecclesiastical concern.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>4.2.1.1.3 David H. Kelsey and his ecclesiastical concern.....</b>	<b>94</b>
4.2.1.2 An ecclesiastical concern of Yale-trained postliberal theologians.....	97
<b>4.2.1.2.1 James J. Buckley and his ecclesiastical concern .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.2 Joseph A. DiNoia, O.P. and his ecclesiastical concern .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.3 Garrett Green and his ecclesiastical concern.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.4 Stanley Hauerwas and his ecclesiastical concern .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.5 George Hunsinger and his ecclesiastical concern.....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.6 Bruce D. Marshall and his ecclesiastical concern.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.7 William C. Placher and his ecclesiastical concern.....</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.8 George W. Stroup and his ecclesiastical concern.....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.9 Ronald F. Thiemann and his ecclesiastical concern .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>4.2.1.2.10 David S. Yeago and his ecclesiastical concern .....</b>	<b>116</b>

4 2.1.2.11 David B. Burrell, C.S.C. and his ecclesiastical concern ...	119
4.2.2 A conclusion from external evidence .....	121
4.3 A conclusion.....	122
<b>Chapter 5. A Reformed Assessment of Lindbeck’s Ecclesiology and Its Ethical Implications.....</b>	<b>124</b>
5.1 An analysis of Lindbeck’s ecclesiology .....	124
5.1.1 A unitive ecumenicity-centred ecclesiology.....	125
5.1.2 Ecclesiology as a diachronic approach to the unity of the church .....	127
5.1.3 Ecclesiology seeking theological legitimacy .....	130
5.1.4 Ecclesiology seeking an Israel-like church.....	131
5.1.5 Ecclesiology based on postliberalism .....	134
5.1.6 A conclusion .....	138
5.2 A Reformed assessment of Lindbeck’s ecclesiology .....	140
5.2.1 Reformed ecumenicity.....	140
5.2.1.1 Reformed identity: a classical and contextualizing Reformed theology .....	140
5.2.1.2 A classical and contextualizing Reformed ecumenicity .....	148
5.2.1.2.1 A classical aspect.....	149
5.2.1.2.2 A contextualizing aspect .....	153
5.2.2 A Reformed evaluation of Lindbeck’s ecclesiology .....	157
5.2.2.1 Concerning a unitive ecumenicity.....	157
5.2.2.2 Concerning ecclesiology as a diachronic approach to the unity of the church.....	159
5.2.2.3 Concerning ecclesiology seeking theological legitimacy .....	161
5.2.2.4 Concerning ecclesiology seeking an Israel-like church .....	165
5.2.2.5 Concerning ecclesiology based on postliberalism .....	168
5.3 A Reformed assessment of ethical implications of Lindbeck’s ecclesiology ....	172
5.3.1 An aspect of the intrasystematic view of truth .....	172
5.3.2 An aspect of the cultural-linguistic view of religion .....	177
5.3.3 A Reformed assessment of Lindbeck’s ecclesial ethics.....	180

<b>Chapter 6. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>&lt; Works Consulted &gt; .....</b>	<b>192</b>

# ABSTRACT

**Title:** A Study of George A. Lindbeck's Ecclesiology and Its Ethical Implications: A Reformed Assessment

**Researcher:** Junseop Kim

**Supervisor:** Prof. Daniël P. Veldsman

**Department:** Dogmatics and Christian Ethics

**Degree:** Philosophiae Doctor

The hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology is an ecclesiastical concern rather than a doctrinal one. It is substantiated by two kinds of evidence: internal and external evidences. Internal evidence indicates that throughout Lindbeck's life, an ecclesiastical concern has been developing and actively working. External evidence implies that an ecclesiastical concern is at the core of postliberalism and the Yale school in which Lindbeck has been involved. In this respect, his theology can be defined as an ecclesiology.

Lindbeck's ecclesiology has some characteristics: a unitive ecumenicity-centred ecclesiology, a diachronic approach to the unity of the church, a theological legitimacy-seeking ecclesiology, a nonsupersessionist Israel-like ecclesiology, and an ecclesiology based on postliberalism.

Reformed ecumenicity can be proposed as a standard for assessing Lindbeck's ecclesiology. It has two aspects: classical and contextualizing. Classical means Calvinism-rooted, and contextualizing refers to making the text relevant to the context without changing its message.

The following are Reformed assessments of Lindbeck's ecclesiology. First, Lindbeck refers to the visible church as an institution, while Calvin sees it as an organism. Second, convergence ecumenicity which Lindbeck seeks, aims at 'return to Rome'



instead of 'return to the Scripture.' Third, his quest for the nature of doctrine is a bold and challenging one in that he attempts to modify the introduction of systematic theology in order to defend his ecclesiology. Fourth, he seeks a nonsupersessionist Israel-like ecclesiology. Reformed Covenant theology also objects supersessionism or replacement theology. Lastly, unlike postliberalism which places one-sided emphasis on the particularity of religious traditions, Reformed theology emphasizes equally the universality and the particularity of religions, based on the idea of God's general and special revelations.

In a Reformed view, Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics is assessed as follows. It attempts to overcome theological liberals' universalistic and reductionist tendency by emphasizing the particularity of religions. It also focuses on the intratextual and performative aspects of Christian ethics. Its notion of incommensurability, however, has difficulty in explaining the continuity between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world, and between religions. In contrast, Reformed theology can solve the problem by using the idea of revelatory continuity.

## KEY WORDS

- George Lindbeck
- Unitive Ecumenicity
- Ecclesiology
- Postliberalism
- Reformed Theology
- Ecclesial ethics

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The statement of the problem

The contemporary Lutheran theologian George A. Lindbeck (born 1923) <sup>1</sup> has generally been known both as a founder of the Yale school and an advocate of postliberal theology or narrative theology. Recent studies in the twenty-first century, however, show that various attempts have been and are being made to reinterpret Lindbeck beyond the existing interpretations of him. Among them are the following studies: a study of Lindbeck from the viewpoint of the philosophy of religion, as is presented in Beverley Clack and Brian R. Clack (2008) and Victoria S. Harrison (2006); a study of Lindbeck in terms of religious pluralism, as is presented in George R. Sumner (2004); a study of Lindbeck in terms of religious epistemology, as is presented in James E. White (2006), Steven B. Sherman (2008), and Robert C. Neville (2009); a study of Lindbeck from the viewpoint of religious realism, as is presented in Robert A. Cathey (2009) and Adonis Vidu (2004); a study of Lindbeck from the viewpoint of the relation between George Lindbeck and Karl Barth, as is presented in Thomas J. Hastings (2004); a study of Lindbeck in the light of pragmatism, as is presented in Chad C. Pecknold (2005) and Michael Horton (2011); a study of Lindbeck in relation to public ethics, as is presented in David Hollenbach, S.J. (2003). Each of these attempts has its own significance in that it tries to access Lindbeck from a new, distinctive perspective, reinterpreting some of his main ideas in today's theological setting. Despite such hermeneutical contributions these studies expose a common weakness. While seeking its own goal, not one of these studies presents us with a holistic approach to nor perspective on Lindbeck. In other words, it takes little interest in discovering his ultimate concern that permeates through his life and thoughts. This

---

<sup>1</sup> Special experiences and careers in Lindbeck's life include his childhood in China as the son of American Lutheran missionaries, the study of Medieval philosophy in the USA., teaching at Yale Divinity School (1952-1993) and the participation in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) as one of sixty "Delegated Observers" from other Christian communions, who represented the Lutheran World Federation, the involvement in ecumenical dialogues, especially between Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches, and the participation as a member in the Joint Commission between the Vatican and Lutheran World Federation (1968-1987).

dissertation takes the view that Lindbeck's life and theology are grounded on his ultimate concern. In other words, it considers that his special experiences in life, his unique career as a theologian, and his distinctive ideas of theology are all connected with his ultimate concern. All these things thus need to be illumined and described in the light of his ultimate concern.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, this dissertation will regard Lindbeck's ultimate concern as the hermeneutical core of his theology.

On the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology, this dissertation suggests the hypothesis that it is an ecclesiastical concern.<sup>3</sup>

The suggested hypothesis might be challenged by its counterpart arguing that doctrinal concern is his main interest. According to the counterpart, the whole life and theology of Lindbeck aimed at the establishment of a new theory of doctrine appropriate for a postliberal age. Lindbeck has earned a great reputation for his own approach to doctrine, namely the cultural-linguistic theory of doctrine, which is presented in his best-known work *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984).<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation will argue that Lindbeck's doctrinal concern serves his ecclesiastical one: His doctrinal concern aims at theologically legitimizing his ecclesiastical one, his ecumenical one in particular.

This dissertation will substantiate the hypothesis by two kinds of evidence: internal and external evidences.

---

<sup>2</sup> In this respect, this dissertation considers Lindbeck's ultimate concern as the hermeneutical core of his theology.

<sup>3</sup> Doyle (2005:158) says that Lindbeck has been wrongly treated as 'a religious philosopher and social theorist' contrary to 'his practical, ecumenical intentions.' It implies that discussions on the cultural-linguistic approach to religion, which is presented in Lindbeck (1984), have been separated from its ecclesiological moorings, finally finding their major loci in 'fundamental theology and philosophy of religion' (Doyle 2005:158). An ecclesiological approach to Lindbeck is necessary to avoid the misperception that the main goals of his ideas are merely theoretical and speculative.

<sup>4</sup> In this work Lindbeck categorizes the approaches to doctrine into the following three areas: cognitive-propositional approach, experiential-expressivist approach, and cultural-linguistic approach.

Internal evidence suggests that throughout Lindbeck's life, an ecclesiastical concern has been developing and actively working. External evidence implies that an ecclesiastical concern is at the core of the theological movements in which he has been involved: postliberalism and the Yale school. By those two kinds of evidence, it will be made clear that an ecclesiastical concern is the hermeneutical core of his theology.

In brief, this dissertation will identify an ecclesiastical concern as the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology, and it will thus define his theology as an ecclesiology.

This dissertation will analyze and assess Lindbeck's ecclesiology from a Reformed perspective, especially from the viewpoint of Reformed ecumenicity based on Reformed identity.<sup>5</sup> It will also examine and evaluate ethical implications of his ecclesiology from the Reformed perspective. In particular, it will give a solution to a problem of Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics: its notion of incommensurability has difficulty in explaining the continuity between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world, and between religions.

---

<sup>5</sup> In 1995, there was a historical dialogue between evangelicals and postliberals, namely, the Wheaton Theology Conference. On the final morning of the conference, a panel discussion was held among George A. Lindbeck, George Hunsinger, Gabriel Fackre and Alister E. McGrath, during which McGrath attempted to assess the postliberalism represented by Lindbeck. At the panel discussion, Lindbeck and Hunsinger were the representatives of postliberalism while Fackre and McGrath were those of evangelicalism. For information about the panel discussion, see Lindbeck *et al.* (1996:246-253). So far, in contrast, no distinguishable dialogue has been made between Reformed theologians and Lindbeck. Therefore, there is a need for a Reformed analysis and evaluation of Lindbeck's theology, precisely his ecclesiology. This dissertation will thus attempt to do such work based on a Reformed ecumenicity.

## 1.2 The purpose of study

This dissertation will first attempt to substantiate the hypothesis that Lindbeck's ultimate concern is an ecclesiastical one. It will examine the validity of the view that his ultimate concern is a doctrinal one<sup>6</sup>, and then substantiate the hypothesis by internal and external evidences. Internal evidence indicates that throughout Lindbeck's life, an ecclesiastical concern has been developing and actively working. External evidence implies that an ecclesiastical concern is at the core of postliberalism and the Yale school in which Lindbeck has been involved.

Then, this dissertation will analyze Lindbeck's ecclesiology. Lindbeck's ecclesiology has some characteristics. To begin with, it is a unitive ecumenicity-centred ecclesiology. Then, it is a diachronic approach to the unity of the church. It seeks theological legitimacy. It also emphasizes the notion of Israel-like church. Finally, it is based on postliberalism. Each of these will be examined from a Reformed perspective.

Ethical implications of Lindbeck's ecclesiology will also be examined. This dissertation will focus on the postliberal character of his ecclesial ethics. That is, it will examine the intrasystematic and the cultural-linguistic aspects of his ecclesial ethics from a Reformed perspective.

Finally, this dissertation will present a perspective of Reformed ecumenicity: a classical and contextualizing Reformed ecumenicity. By *classical*, this dissertation means that Reformed ecumenicity is rooted in Calvin's or Calvinists' teachings of ecumenicity. Then, by *contextualizing*, this dissertation means that Reformed theology should recognize various challenges of the given situation, and respond to them to the principles of Reformed heritage. This dissertation will focus on the challenges of

---

<sup>6</sup> It will be later discovered in this dissertation that Lindbeck's doctrinal concern basically serves for the theological legitimization of his ecumenical ecclesiology: it is not the ultimate concern in his life and thoughts.

postmodernism and religious pluralism of our age, and give a Reformed response to them, inspired by Kim's notion of Reformed identity and ecumenicity.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Yung Han Kim (1946~ ), a founder of Korea Reformed Theology Society, served as Senior Professor of Systematic Theology at Soongsil University Graduate School of Christian Studies, Seoul, South Korea.

### 1.3 The limitation of study

Lindbeck never published any systematic doctrinal work related to ecclesiology. Doyle (2005:157) comments on the collection of Lindbeck's essays (2002) that it surveys his theological thoughts from an ecumenical and ecclesiological perspective, but it is not a systematic work on the doctrine of church. This dissertation will focus on the characteristics of Lindbeck's ecclesiology which are presented in his works, especially in his book (2002).

Ethical implications of Lindbeck's ecclesiology will be limited in this study. It will not deal with them in terms of his theology in general, but in terms of ecumenism in which he has been involved. Ethical themes which are related to Lindbeck's theology beyond the ecumenical level will be avoided.

A Reformed perspective that this dissertation takes as the standard according to which Lindbeck's ecclesiology and its ethical implications can be assessed, will be limited to the basic stream of the Reformed tradition.<sup>8</sup> This dissertation will maintain its own perspective based on Calvin's and Calvinists'<sup>9</sup> views of ecumenicity.

---

<sup>8</sup> Plantinga, Jr. (2001:281) describes the distinctness of Reformed churches as follows: their emphasis is 'on the sovereignty of God', 'on the authority of Scripture', 'on the need for disciplined holiness in personal Christian life', and 'on Christianity as a religion of the Kingdom'. In its homepage of the year 2013, the Reformed Theological Seminary in USA. presents two main reasons why it can be called Reformed: firstly, it is rooted in the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, which is characterized by the protest 'against false teachings in church' and the return 'to the true gospel under the leadership of Reformers such as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin'; secondly, it is strongly committed to 'three basic doctrines': 'Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, and Sola Fide', which are 'the central beliefs' of the Reformation. This dissertation is generally in accord with these attempts at interpreting Reformed tradition.

<sup>9</sup> Concerning the perspective of Reformed ecumenicity, this dissertation is indebted to Calvin (1960b), Bavinck (2003), Berkhof (1996), and Kim (2003).



## **1.4 Method: literature study**

This dissertation aims at viewing and assessing Lindbeck's theology from a Reformed perspective. Recent studies suggest that various interpretations of Lindbeck's thoughts might be possible. To better understand his work, the hermeneutical core of his theology has to be discovered. This dissertation proposes the hypothesis that the hermeneutical core is an ecclesiastical concern. An ecclesiastical concern will be substantiated as the ultimate concern in his life and thoughts. This is the starting point of this dissertation. It will examine the characteristics of Lindbeck's ecclesiology and evaluate them from a Reformed perspective. To this goal, Reformed ecumenicity will be defined. Ethical implications of Lindbeck's ecclesiology will be explored and assessed from the Reformed perspective. The main methods of this dissertation will be, firstly, to discover the hermeneutical key to understanding the object of study, and then to assess the object of study from the chosen perspective. The present study will be a literature study in which it will focus on books, articles, and theses as its primary or secondary sources.

## **1.5 A preview of each chapter**

Chapter two will present a survey of recent studies on Lindbeck. Various attempts to interpret him have been made since the dawn of the twenty-first century, which means that today we've got different perspectives on him, especially on his theology. In this chapter, a survey of these attempts will first be given, and then a general evaluation of them as a whole will be made. Chapter three and chapter four will seek to discover the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology. This dissertation will suggest and substantiate the hypothesis: The hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology is an ecclesiastical concern. To justify the hypothesis, chapter three will examine and evaluate a possible rival to the hypothesis, that is, the argument that the hermeneutical core is a doctrinal concern. Then, chapter four will substantiate the hypothesis by internal and external evidences. Chapter five will explore Lindbeck's ecclesiology and assess it from a Reformed perspective. This chapter will also analyze ethical implications of Lindbeck's ecclesiology, and evaluate them from the Reformed perspective. Chapter six will summarize my research and present it as conclusion.

## **Chapter 2. A Survey of Recent Studies on Lindbeck**

A survey of recent studies on Lindbeck will be presented before searching for the hermeneutical core of his theology. Various attempts to interpret him have been made since the dawn of the twenty-first century, which means that today we've got different perspectives on him, especially on his theology. In this chapter, a survey of the main studies on Lindbeck in the twenty-first century will first be given, and then a general evaluation of them as a whole will be made.

### **2.1 A survey of recent studies on Lindbeck**

#### **2.1.1 In the light of the philosophy of religion**

In the first chapter Clack and Clack (2008) state: this book is an introductory one to the philosophy of religion. It covers both the traditional and the modern issues relating to the field; however, its focus is on "the naturalist critique of traditional religious belief" (Taliaferro 2014). Clack and Clack (2008:1) deal, especially, with the central issues concerning religion over the past 2500 years, such as the demonstrability of the existence of a god, the compatibility of the belief in that god with the reality of suffering in the world, the possibility of the presence of the world after death or the definability of religion as a product of the human mind, and seeking for a foundation for them. And the foundation the authors finally found is "an exclusively humanistic view of religion" (Clark 2010:203). They are convinced that the spread of "religiously motivated terror" is caused by "the perpetrators' supernaturalism allied to a desire for religious certainty," and thus suggest that we should enhance "humanistic forms of religion which are free of supernaturalism and the need for certitude" (Clark 2010:202-206). This conviction is based on the belief that the object of religion is nothing other than our human involvement in the world (Clark 2010:206).

Regarding religious language, Clack and Clack (2008:109) point out that its “problematic nature” supports the atheistic claim against the belief in God. They also argue that from the naturalist viewpoint, atheism has much stronger evidence in its favour than theism and that, nevertheless, it does not always imply the necessity of rejecting religion completely: in other words, it means “only a rejection of a particular way of understanding and approaching religious belief” (Clack & Clack 2008:109). Lindbeck (1984:33; Clack & Clack 2008:109) says.

It [a religion] is not primarily an array of beliefs about the true and the good (though it may involve these), or a symbolism expressive of attitudes, feelings and sentiments (though these will be generated). Rather, it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments. Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities.

To Lindbeck traditional theological approaches to religion, that is, the propositional-cognitivist approach, the experiential-expressivist approach and the combining of these two, are not suitable to modern times; nevertheless, it is not proper to say that religion is no longer a matter of significance, because it still works, to be precise, it functions as our human communal phenomenon like a culture or a language. Clack and Clack hold that religion can continue to exist without having any element of supernaturalism and religious certainty: it can subsist assuming a humanistic form.

Harrison (2006:133) objects to the claim that religion itself is never distinctive: we cannot see any difference between religions and secular systems and, in this sense, there is no religion. He owes the difficulty in defining religion to the essentialist approach to religion. According to this approach, “there are certain essential features that make a thing what it is, and these features allow us to define it as such” and “religion is one thing, and all religions are instances of that thing in virtue of possessing the same essential property or properties” (Harrison 2006:148). Instead of the essential approach to religion, Harrison offers a pragmatic solution, that is, the family

resemblance approach to religion. This approach focuses on the particularity of individual religious traditions and the difference between them. Harrison (2006:148-149) says,

[T]here is no good reason to suppose that Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are each one homogeneous entity. Each of these religious traditions can itself be analyzed using the family resemblance approach. If these traditions are thought of as composed of sub-traditions possessing family resemblances, there will be less of an inclination to search for a homogeneous tradition that is, itself, highly contested. Nor will we be inclined to expect all those who adhere to any one of the major religions to accept exactly the same set of beliefs.

Harrison's family resemblance approach to religion is grounded on Ludwig Wittgenstein's game theory telling that there is no "single feature that all games have in common," and thus "no single feature can be used to define what games are" (Harrison 2006:141-142) and that if we examine games we cannot find "something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that" (Wittgenstein 1958:31). Harrison (2006:143) thinks of John Hick as an advocate of his approach to religion and evaluates him positively because he proposed to adopt Paul Tillich's idea of "ultimate concern" as the main criterion by which "religious beliefs and practices" are distinguished from non-religious, or secular, ones.<sup>10</sup> In the long run, Harrison (2006:149) concludes,

For, surely, in a multi-cultural world we need a theoretical approach to the study of religions that is not from the outset prejudicial to any religion. And a family resemblance approach seems most suited to this requirement.

We can find that in some aspects, Harrison was influenced by Lindbeck. Firstly, Harrison classifies definitions of religion into three types: intellectual type, affective type, and functional type. Lindbeck also categorizes theories of religions into three models: the propositional-cognitivist model, the experiential-expressivist model, and

---

<sup>10</sup> For John Hick's notion of the family resemblance approach to religion, see Hick (1989:3-5).

the cultural-linguistic model. The intellectual type corresponds to the propositional-cognitivist model, the affective type to the experiential-expressivist model<sup>11</sup> and the functional type to the cultural-linguistic model, respectively. Thus, regarding his classification of definitions of religion Harrison may be assessed to generally follow Lindbeck with the exception that he puts the intellectual type and the affective type together in another category, that is, the “*religious*” type of definition<sup>12</sup> (Harrison 2006:134). Secondly, Harrison’s attempt to define religion is similar to Lindbeck’s in that they have both an interdisciplinary character. Lindbeck and Harrison both resort to the philosopher of linguistics Ludwig Wittgenstein<sup>13</sup> and the anthropologist Clifford Geertz<sup>14</sup>. Thirdly, like Lindbeck<sup>15</sup>, Harrison emphasizes the individuality, or the particularity<sup>16</sup>, of religious traditions.

### **2.1.2 In the light of religious pluralism**

In Sumner (2004) modern Christianity is diagnosed as suffering from religious pluralism. Pluralists attack traditional confessions of faith on these three convictions: firstly, such confessions “offend a modern understanding of truth, and stand in the way of harmony between religions and cultures”; secondly, the ultimate reality is represented “by the wide array of particular myths, rites, and beliefs of the religious communities of the world”; thirdly, for the purpose of preventing themselves from “the

---

<sup>11</sup> For the correspondence of the affective type to the experiential-expressivist model, see Harrison (2006:134).

<sup>12</sup> Harrison (2006:134-135) classifies the intellectual definition and the affective definition together in the religious type of religion because, despite their dissimilarities, they commonly view religion from “a perspective that focuses on features of religion that are important to believers.”

<sup>13</sup> For Wittgenstein’s influences on Harrison and Lindbeck, see Harrison (2006:141-142) and Lindbeck (1984:20, 27) respectively. Lindbeck, in particular, had access to Wittgenstein mainly through Hudson (1975).

<sup>14</sup> For Harrison’s critical examination of Geertz’s recognition of religion as “a sub-class of cultures,” see Harrison (2006:139). Lindbeck admits that he was influenced by Geertz (1973).

<sup>15</sup> Lindbeck developed his own approach to religion, the cultural-linguistic approach, which focuses on the individuality, or the particularity of religious traditions (Moyaert 2011:153).

<sup>16</sup> For the recent emphasis on the individuality of religions from a Schleiermacherian perspective, see Knight (2013:24). According to Moyaert (2012b:26), the rise of the so-called comparative theology is related to the recent tendency to stress “the otherness of the religious other.”

evil effects of fanaticism”, “such communities should restrict themselves to the moral effects of religious practice, the resulting works of love, and thus evolve away from any exclusive claims for their tradition” (Sumner 2004:1). Sumner (2004:1) considers these two things as fatal to the churches in modern times: the challenges to “the primacy of the revelation in Jesus” and to “the uniqueness of his mediating agency in salvation”. He offers as a solution the “postpluralist” approach to “the relationship between Christian belief and the claims of other religious traditions” (Sumner 2004:2). This approach is, above all, based on the recognition of the distinction between “other religious traditions” and “pluralism itself” (Sumner 2004:3). Concerning pluralism, Sumner (2004:3) says,

While pluralism seems to focus its attention on the plethora of traditions, in fact its main task is the modern, post-Enlightenment questioning of the truth of Christian claims in the light of historical and cultural relativism, of which the non-Christian religions amount to a prime occasion. If one accepts this insight, one can no longer consider pluralism in a vacuum. It must rather be seen as a specific Western cultural and intellectual phenomenon posing its challenge to Christianity. One must then consider pluralism’s own historical roots, the particulars of its story, intertwined as they are with Christianity’s own intellectual travails in the past three hundred years.

He continues that theological liberalism, which has its root in the Enlightenment, is in the wrong in that it holds that it exercises “an independent and objective norm of reason”: liberalism doubts the traditional beliefs of Christianity and, at the same time, seeks to rebuild them on the ground of rationality (Sumner 2004:7). Reflecting on Nietzschean genealogy, Sumner (2004:7) says,

Liberalism, by failing to see itself for what it is as one more tradition of thought born of distinctive practices in a particular community, becomes unstable and decomposes into genealogy.

Contrary to pluralism which emerged for its special purpose in a particular period in history, the existence of other religions is, in Christians’ sight, a universal phenomenon throughout history.

To be sure, Christians have, since the beginning of the church, had contact with, and so formed opinions of, other religious traditions (Sumner 2004:3).

Based on this distinction, Sumner offers a solution to the challenge of religious pluralism to Christianity in modern times, that is, to assess the claims and practices of other religious traditions by using the notion of final primacy. Final primacy may be defined as follows: it “sets non-Christian religions in relation to the unique mediating role of Jesus Christ” and “relates the truth claims of other religions to the overall scheme of grace” (Wycliff College 2014). Concerning the final primacy of Jesus Christ, Sumner (2004:16-17) says,

in narratives generated from the scriptural narrative, by which theological constructions imagine alien claims and communities somehow engrafted into the divine economy, Christ is the One toward whom the narratives run and from whom their truth (to the extent that they are true) derives. He is at once the *finis legis* (the end of the law) and the *prima veritas* (the first truth). “Final primacy” is the pattern common to all appropriate Christian theologies of religions.

Sumner also tests the idea of final primacy in these five areas: “in modern theology, with particular attention to the work of Barth, Rahner, and Pannenberg (chapter 3); in theories concerning the economy of salvation, as articulated in various Trinitarian theologies of the religions (chapter 4); in the theology of mission (chapter 5); in Indian Christian theology (chapter 6); and among theologies of inculturation (chapter 7)” (Molleur 2005:521).

Noticeably, in doing all this, Sumner (2004:8) draws on these two ideas of religion: Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of the recovery of the particularities, and George Lindbeck's ‘postliberal’ - in the sense of emphasizing the particularity of each religion -, and ‘regulative’ - in the sense of stressing the function of religion as rule – approach to religion. Sumner (2004:8) mentions Lindbeck as follows:

Developing the metaphor of natural languages, George Lindbeck, for example, understands each religion to have its own “grammar” or internal logic, whose



rules are expressed in a community's doctrine, in keeping with which it can express itself in a variety of ways.

### **2.1.3 In the light of religious epistemology**

White (2006) distinguishes three types of theory of truth: the correspondence theory of truth, the coherence theory of truth and the pragmatic theory of truth. Firstly, the correspondence theory of truth, the dominant position of truth in the history of the West, claims that truth is "that which corresponds with fact and is both objective and absolute" (White 2006:5). Thus, the truth or the falsity of a statement is determined by whether it corresponds with external reality or not (White 2006:5). Such an understanding of truth first keeps itself distant from subjectivity and then seems quite a "common-sensical view of truth" rooting in the average opinion of ordinary people that if something is true, it must exist (White 2006:5). What is problematic with such an understanding is that every concept in human language does not have its referent (White 2006:5). Secondly, the coherence theory of truth means that so long as our system of belief or thought has no contradiction in itself, it can be considered as true (White 2006:5). Despite its strength of placing a high value on intrasystematic consistency, such a theory may have difficulty in making "ultimate statements regarding truth" because there may be two contradictory statements both of which are completely coherent (White 2006:5). Lastly, the pragmatic theory of truth argues that truth has an inseparable connection with function. This theory may be suitable for modern times emphasizing functional effectiveness, but also put aside the questions of morals which have to be most seriously dealt with in modern times (White 2006:6).

Analyzing the three types of theory of truth respectively, White (2006:178) concludes that Lindbeck's proposed theory of truth is a new one which combines all of them on the basis of the understanding of doctrines as second-order truth claims.

Lindbeck proposes a truth-theory that combines the correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth by likening religion to a single gigantic proposition. He separates ontology from methodological concerns,

thereby making biblical doctrines second-order truth claims, affirming nothing about the extra-linguistic or extra-human reality (White 2006:178).

Sherman (2008) attempts to build up a postconservative holistic theological epistemology. Postconservatives<sup>17</sup> believe that evangelicalism in modern times undergoes a crisis: “the crumbling of modern foundationalism within practically all disciplines has revealed much evangelical theology tethered to a cracked base, forcing structural reassessments of the whole enterprise” and that answers must thus be sought for to the “epistemological questions facing evangelical theology” (Sherman 2008:143). Sherman, as a postconservative, wrestled with such a crisis in evangelical circles and proposed a solution to it, that is, for evangelicals to cautiously adjust their theology to epistemological holism. He thinks of the philosopher of linguistics W. V. O. Quine as an advocate for epistemological holism. Quine’s epistemological holism<sup>18</sup> is, above all, based on the notion of “a belief system as a web or net” (Murphy 1990:8). Murphy (1990:8) says,

This Quinian model of knowledge, along with the epistemological and linguistic theses that go with it, is commonly referred to as holism. Holism rejects the distinction between analytic and synthetic truths because meanings can always be adjusted to fit beliefs to experience in preference to rejection of the beliefs. Holism denies that there is some class of basic beliefs that can provide an unquestionable court of appeal to settle disputes. Furthermore, it does away with the long-lived distinction between fact and value.

Quine’s holism, above all, objects to two main ideas of traditional foundationalism: “the need for there to be fundamentally indubitable beliefs, and a merely one-way direction of reasoning (i.e., upward from the foundation)” (Sherman 2008:122-123). In other words, it does not have any “preference in the direction of reasoning”, nor puts any restriction on the diversity of “relationships among web beliefs,” which implies that

---

<sup>17</sup> For the information about postconservatism, or postconservative evangelicalism, see Taylor (2004).

<sup>18</sup> For the direct information of Quine’s epistemological holism, see Quine & Ullian (1978).

facts have the “theory-laden” character and resort to some extent to “the theoretical knowledge structure” (Sherman 2008:123).

Sherman considers George Lindbeck as one of the most supportive theologians of Quine’s holism. According to Sherman (2008:123), Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic theory has an epistemological implication: it offers “a community-oriented framework within which epistemological questions may be addressed.” The epistemological features of Lindbeck’ theology can be described as follows: firstly, acquiring language within a community of faith is like “the knowledge-gaining process” in other cultures; secondly, the object of theology is not God’s being but God’s attributes and his relationship with creatures, especially human beings (Sherman 2008:123). Such epistemological features reflect a kind of “postliberal skepticism toward both foundations and apologetics”<sup>19</sup> based on the notion of so-called intratextuality of religion (Sherman 2008:123). According to Lindbeck (1984:129), intratextuality of religion is described as follows:

The grammar of religion, like that of language, cannot be explicated or learned by analysis of experience, but only by practice. Religious and linguistic competence may help greatly in dealing with experience, but experience by itself may be more a hindrance than a help to acquiring competence: children, at least in Jesus’ parabolic sense, have an advantage over adults. In short, religions, like languages, can be understood only in their own terms, not by transposing them into an alien speech.

By the term *intratextuality* Lindbeck (1984:129-130) means that his postliberal programme is against any foundationalist approach to religion which is the core of theological liberalism seeking for “apologetic intelligibility”, “accommodation to culture” or translation of “traditional meanings into currently intelligible terms.”<sup>20</sup> Lindbeck’s

---

<sup>19</sup> According to Lindbeck (1984:129), postliberal skepticism does not aim at the whole exclusion of apologetics: it rather claims to “an ad hoc and nonfoundational” apologetics which does not stand “at the center of theology.”

<sup>20</sup> Sherman (2008:124) says that theologians following Lindbeck are generally reluctant to “disclose adequately an ontology with respect to the signified (i.e., God)” and, further, tend to lay aside “metaphysical or eschatological realism,” and that, hence, Robert Webber and his postconservative colleagues critically accepted Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic theory: they

postliberal theology emphasizes “descriptive rather than apologetic intelligibility” or “resistance to translation.” (Lindbeck 1984:129-130) Contrary to its critics’ charge that it “confine[s] the theological study of religion to an intellectual ghetto, it may rather get some “interdisciplinary advantages” by a contact with modern disciplines such as “history, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy.” (Lindbeck 1984:129-130) In short, Lindbeck’s intratextual, postliberal theology has both anti-foundationalist and interdisciplinary characters, and may, in this sense, be said to bear much resemblance to Quine’s epistemic holism, especially Quine’s web of belief.

Sherman (2008:124) concludes that despite its limitation “with respect to ontological considerations”, Quine’s epistemic holism is still of use and that evangelicals’ “critical appropriation of epistemological holism” will be a far-reaching transformation for them.

Neville (2009) objects to a misunderstanding of Lindbeck, according to which he argues that doctrines are far from the truth/falsity judgment. Neville (2009:35) thinks that the misunderstanding, in turn, comes from a misinterpretation of Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic theory of “doctrine as the grammar underlying the practice of a community of faith”: any doctrinal statements can be legitimized so long as they merely describe the regulative grammar of the religious practice of given actual community.

Theology, on this interpretation of Lindbeck, is transformed to church history or congregational studies. The conclusion that any community’s doctrines are valid for that community comes from the negative implication that theology can have no normative thrust other than discerning when a community is being faithful to its basic grammar. That is, Lindbeck’s rejection of conservative propositional theology and also of liberal experiential/expressivist theology leaves no normative context for criticizing a “postliberal community” and its doctrines. This is surely not what Lindbeck intended with his theory of doctrine. What went wrong with his theory, or the

---

generally welcome that theory but still places an emphasis on “the reality of the propositional or narrative referent of doctrinal claims (e.g., God’s presence and promises).” For Webber’s postconservatism, or postconservative evangelicalism, see Webber (2002), Webber (2009) and Sherman (2008:194-200).

reception of it, to allow theology to be reduced to social science? (Neville 2009:35).

Neville (2009:35) argues that whatever theological tendency we have, either conservative or liberal, our theologies necessarily perform three kinds of function: the analysis of doctrine, the development of doctrine, and the defence of doctrine. Among them the defence function implies the normative role of theology (Neville 2009:35-36). Neville (2009:36) also argues that although some interpreters of Lindbeck claim that “theology can only work within a community’s deep grammatical assumptions without questioning them,” he has a broader understanding of theology than this.

According to Neville (2009:36-37), Lindbeck’s theological goal is to show that the proper place in which religious matters can be explored is the actual community of faith. For, otherwise, theology would fall into a purely theoretical activity with no practical concern. This is the point which Lindbeck made concerning his objection to two traditional approaches to doctrine, that is, the propositional-cognitivist and the experiential-expressivist approaches.

Such is the force of Lindbeck’s polemic against propositional theology for being too abstract and experiential/expressive theology for being too individualistic, interior, and isolated from cultural practice. His polemic could be directed with equal force against Biblical scholars who do not treat their texts as located in communal practice, or against Christian ethicists who do not do the same (Neville 2009:36).

Thus, the chief focus of theological inquiry must be to analyze how religious symbols such as doctrinal statements function in the practice of a religious community because the “concrete practical location” of a religious community is the necessary condition of the truth of those symbols (Neville 2009:36).

Such a relation between religious symbols and the practice of a religious community makes theological inquiry extend to “philosophical and interdisciplinary” investigation into “the nature of religion”: in other words, philosophy of religion becomes an essential subject of theology (Neville 2009:36). Moreover, such a relation makes theological

inquiry become involved in semiotics, more accurately, in “the semiotics of religious symbols” and “the study of religious symbols themselves, understood in terms of their semiotic settings and in terms of their various roles within religious practice” as well (Neville 2009:36-37).

To summarize Neville’s statements: Lindbeck never denies doctrine’s role in judging the truth/falsity; he simply emphasizes the importance of the practice of a religious community as the location of truth.

#### **2.1.4 In the light of religious realism**

Cathey (2009) deals with the realism, or ontological truth, implied in Lindbeck’s cultural linguistic theory of religion and doctrine. He, especially, examines the validity of the traditional claim to the correspondence of the propositional religious assertions to reality. He accepts “Lindbeck’s critique of propositionalism, and the way in which he shows the proper place of assertions in Christian speech and life”: propositional truth is not ontological truth itself but a function of that truth (Cathey 2009:52-53). In Cathey’s sight, propositionalism has its own limitation. Firstly, it must presuppose a linguistic and cultural setting in which meaningful statements can be made.

The categorical adequacy or intrasystematic truth of such a culture guarantees the meaningfulness of its language that makes possible the expression of both true and false propositions by competent speakers of the language (Cathey 2009:53).

Propositionalism, however, tends to overlook “the fact that a religious system is more like a natural language than a formally organized set of explicit statements, and that the right use of this language, unlike a mathematical one, cannot be detached from a particular way of behaving” (Lindbeck 1984:64). Secondly, it has an intellectualistic tendency. In other words, for propositionalism, “the locus for truth-by-correspondence,” is not “religious forms of life”, including religious language, but a set of doctrines or a collection of theological speculations (Cathey 2009:53, 58). The problem is that

propositionalism might proceed to propositional inerrancy which means that “the final religion must be exempt from error (for otherwise it could be surpassed)” (Lindbeck 1984:49). Lindbeck (1984:49) says,

This propositional inerrancy has usually been attributed in Christianity to the original “deposit of faith,” though it has also been ascribed to Scripture and *de fide* church doctrines.

Lindbeck (1984:51) also argues that in church history there has always been a concern for “ontological truth by correspondence”; however, it has not always been considered as identical to one for propositionalism

[I]n a culture influenced by what Lonergan calls the systematic differentiation of consciousness, even ordinary common sense supposes that truth by correspondence must be propositional. Both the Protestant who insists on scriptural inerrancy and the Roman Catholic traditionalist counterpart are likely to be suffering from vulgarized forms of a rationalism descended from Greek philosophy by way of Cartesian and post-Cartesian rationalism reinforced by Newtonian science; but in the early centuries of the church, ontological truth by correspondence had not yet been limited to propositionalism. Fundamentalist literalism, like experiential-expressivism, is a product of modernity (Lindbeck 1984:51).

Warning against a future possible decline of doctrine itself, Lindbeck (1984:78) points out the disadvantages of propositionalism - to be precise, of traditional propositional notions of authoritative teachings as follows. Firstly, it makes us find it difficult to explain the rise or the development of new doctrines and at the same time the weakening or the demise of old ones. Secondly, it has difficulty in accounting for the reinterpretation of exiting doctrines to be fit into new contexts. Thirdly, it cannot cope with the ecumenical problematic in modern times: how can two contradicting doctrines in the past be reconciled in the present, especially without abandoning their identity?

Concerning the third disadvantage, propositionalism regards doctrines as first-order propositions and, as a result, cannot produce a genuine “ecumenical convergence”

with no demand for “one side’s admission of misunderstanding, error, or heresy” (Cathey 2009:54). In other words, propositionalism tends to provide “a particular formulation of a doctrine”, hold it “as a truth claim with objective or ontological import,” and thus show “difficulty envisioning the possibility of markedly different formulations of the same doctrine” (Lindbeck 1984:80). To apply propositionalism to the doctrine of the Trinity of God, therefore, it would be concluded that the claim to “the identity of the economic and immanent trinities” by “the Eastern Orthodox and Rahner” and the claim to “the immanent trinity of psychological analogies and substantial relations” by “Augustine, Aquinas, and Bernard Lonergan” cannot be reconciled: in other words, one of both must surrender (Cathey 2009:54-55). Likewise, propositionalism is likely to hinder the divided churches from seeking “the ecumenical convergence” (Cathey 2009:55).

Noticing the limitation of propositionalism, especially its theory of “the correspondence of a proposition to reality”, Cathey (2009:58) who leans on Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic theory of religion and doctrine, accounts for “ontological truth-as-correspondence” in religion, or “how a religion would correspond to the reality of God,” as follows. Firstly, ontological truth in religion is not separable from the practical lives of the communities of faith and their members.

A religion is ontologically true to the extent that it is the occasion for the formation of a people who will correspond to the divine. Ontological truth is shown in life by a religion’s (or a certain deity’s) power of sanctification in the lives of those communities and persons who constitute the religion’s members. Thus, the truth of religious assertions can only be seen when they are taken as part of a greater whole, as part of religious forms of life (Cathey 2009:58).

Secondly, ontological truth-as-correspondence in religion means the adaptation of ourselves to the ultimate reality<sup>21</sup> (Cathey 2009:58). It implies that ontological truth in religion is not the truth that dwells in any religious utterance of it but the one that acts,

---

<sup>21</sup> Cathey (2009:58) expresses this as “the correspondence of the self to God”, or “the conformity of the self to the divine being and will.”



or operates, in forms of life<sup>22</sup> (Cathey 2009:58-59). In other words, a religious discourse can acquire “the propositional truth of ontological correspondence” only when it is performed or enacted in a religious form of life (Lindbeck 1984:65). Lindbeck (1984:65) says,

The ontological truth of religious utterances, like their intrasystematic truth, is different as well as similar to what holds in other realms of discourse. Their correspondence to reality in the view we are expounding is not an attribute that they have when considered in and of themselves, but is only a function of their role in constituting a form of life, a way of being in the world, which itself corresponds to the Most Important, the Ultimately Real.

It also implies that religious utterances, when they are performed, are simultaneously two kinds of function, the performative and the propositional functions (Cathey 2009:59). Cathey (2009:59) says,

[J]ust because a sentence is being used in a liturgical context (“Laura Cathey, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”) to perform what it says does not diminish its propositional force (“Laura, may you be conformed to the character of the God named ‘Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’”). ... [*Some sentences may have multiple functions*]<sup>23</sup> (e.g., the sentences of the Nicene Creed may be used in a liturgical context propositionally or symbolically and in doctrinal dispute as rules).

Thirdly, ontological truth-as-correspondence in religion leads finally to the correspondence of propositions to the ultimate reality. It means that traditionalist propositionalism ascribing “infallibility or inerrancy” to doctrinal statements must be avoided; instead, a modest propositionalism must be sought for which lays “more modest claims for” doctrinal propositions. Cathey (2009:65) argues that Lindbeck’s

---

<sup>22</sup> Lindbeck sometimes uses the term *religion* and the term *a form, or forms, of life* reciprocally. See Lindbeck (1984:33, 51, 64). In particular, he uses the term *the correlative forms of life* to indicate religion, or “the total relevant context” of religion (Lindbeck 1984:64).

<sup>23</sup> Cathey (2009:59) points out that there is a similarity between “Lindbeck’s analysis of the multiple uses of sentences” and “Wittgenstein’s analysis of the functions of rules in a language-game.”

cultural-linguistic theory of religion and doctrine, or his rule theory of doctrine, can fit such a modest propositionalism. Cathey (2009:66, 67) as a scholar studying the doctrine of the Trinity of God, says,

Rule theory requires us to make a distinction between trinitarian doctrine *qua* doctrine (as enduring rules) and trinitarian language (as changing sets of concepts). ... If the doctrines contained in the creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon must always be taken as first-order propositions which correspond to the inner life of God, then the necessary separation between form and content becomes more difficult. If we change the conceptual form of the doctrines into the concepts of some more modern ontology, do we not risk changing the ontological truth claims that the doctrines are supposed to make? Rule theorists do not have this problem. If the doctrines in the creeds are construed as rules for Christian discourse, then the distinction between doctrine and formulation can be made more easily.

In this respect, Cathey is in harmony with Lindbeck (1984:93), who argues that propositions, whether they are first-order or second-order ones, are distinguishable from the forms which they take, and that the change in form does not necessarily mean the change in content, that is, “the truth claim or rule that is being enunciated,” and that we, in turn, cannot state independently what the content of a proposition is without stating that proposition “in different terms that nevertheless have equivalent consequences”. In this view, for instance, “the concept of the *homoousion* (and thus the concept of divine substance) in the Nicene Creed is to be considered as “only one way (albeit a venerable one) of conceiving what is authoritative in the creed for ecumenical Christian identity”, rather than as “the enduring normative content” of the ecumenical Creed, “the rules” of the Creed (Cathey 2009:67-68).

In conclusion, Cathey (2009:68) evaluates Lindbeck’s rule theory based on his cultural-linguistic theory of religion and doctrine as “one plausible solution to the plurality of Christian speech about God as Trinity”.

Vidu (2004) challenges Lindbeck’s language-dominated realism. Lindbeck’s notion of religion may be summarized as follows: firstly, like languages, religions are “structural

wholes” consisting of “a vocabulary, a grammar and internal grammatical rules for these”; secondly, like languages, religions function as “Kantian” “transcendental schemes”, that is, they “condition perception” by providing the proper forms by which human raw experiences are organized, and thus “legislate” what makes the truth meaningful (Vidu 2004:110). Vidu (2004:110-111) first describes the historical background of postliberals’ emphasis upon the importance of linguistic scheme as follows:

There is in postliberalism an unapologetic tendency to assume the primacy of its own textual tradition. In part this mentality stems from dissatisfaction with the ‘cognitive-propositionalist’ neglect of the element of social construction present in knowledge. For postliberals such as George Lindbeck, knowledge and meaningful speech are only possible from within a conceptual scheme, or respectively language[.] ... Meaning and reference are distributed by the conceptual scheme itself.

Vidu, then, points out some problems found in Lindbeck’s notion of religion. To begin with, Lindbeck’s linguistic schemes might seem to exist independently of human experience; furthermore, the former might seem to dominate the latter. Vidu (2004:111) says,

The assumption which must be noted from the outset is that the meaning of these conceptual schemes is available quite independently of the actions of human agents which inhabit this textual world. Although Lindbeck professes a dialectical relationship between scheme and experience, it is quite clear that the relationship is dominated by the conceptual scheme, as he himself admits.

Then, Lindbeck assumes the two orders of truth claims based on such schemes, namely a first-order truth claim and a second-order truth claim. The former is the statement of religious practices such as “liturgy, prayers, stories in the sacred texts, acts of worship etc.,” and thus its ontological truth depends on its correlation “with a form of life ontologically adequate to ultimate reality,” while the latter is the theological reflection on, or the “meta-linguistic clarification” of, religious practice which seeks to

examine and correct the practice by the standard of its internal grammatical rules and which is far from any statements of ontological truth (Vidu 2004:111).

Vidu (2004:111-112) argues that in terms of the authentic holistic view, Lindbeck's model failed to embody its best holistic possibility because of these two things: firstly, its Kantian transcendental and human experience-dominating scheme; secondly, the dualism of the first-order truth claim and the second-order one.

Vidu (2004:111) adds that more basically, such a failure occurred owing to Lindbeck's application of "a certain unconvincing view of language" to the understanding of religion, the point of which is "a renewed interest in form, rather than simply content, in style, rather than simply substance," and according to which language is considered "as a reified whole, as a unitary structure which is constructively active at all times, or as a scheme applicable to any content," and that such an unconvincing view of language must thus be replaced by "a more flexible, more authentically holistic view."

To brief Vidu, it can be said that Lindbeck's model is of a language-dominated realism, and it results from the adoption of a dubious "linguistic metaphor" in the understanding of religion (Vidu 2004:111).

### **2.1.5 In the light of the relation between George A. Lindbeck and Karl Barth, especially in terms of intratextuality**

Hastings (2004) makes a comparative study of George Lindbeck and Thomas F. Torrance (1913-2007), especially in terms of their relation with Karl Barth. To begin with, Hastings focuses on Torrance. The final goal of Torrance's theology may be said "to restore to theological thinking a unitary conception of the universe wherein theoretical and empirical aspects of human knowledge cohere within the authoritative actuality of the vicarious humanity of the incarnation of the divine/human Word and to reconstruct natural theology upon the ground of that revelation" (Hastings 2004:271). And at the core of Torrance's theology is the so-called "*a posteriori objective realism*" (Hastings 2004:275). *A posteriori* objective realism is characterized by the rejection of

any “*independent* (and naturalistically grounded) *Weltanschauung* within which ... Christianity must be interpreted if it is to become understandable in the modern world” and the objection to any “masterful epistemology, elaborated *independently* of actual theological inquiry, which is then to be applied prescriptively to knowledge of God” (Torrance 1998b:293). For Torrance, Karl Barth is an exemplar of a *posteriori* objective realism (Hastings 2004:275): in other words, Barth holds a firm belief that the knowledge of God is founded on “the authoritative givenness of revelation”, not on any “philosophical argumentation for the knowability of God” (Hastings 2004:276; Richardson 2003:xiv). Indeed, Barth (1957:3) argues,

The Knowledge of God occurs in the fulfilment of the revelation of His Word by the Holy Spirit, and therefore in the reality and with the necessity of faith and its obedience.

Hastings (2004:276) also observes that Barth’s theology does not necessarily lead to a total rejection of philosophy: in other words, Barth admits that philosophy can be used *ad hoc*<sup>24</sup>.

Nevertheless, Barth’s theology is best featured by its directedness “by the authoritative givenness of revelation” (Hastings 2004:276). It is supported by Middleton (2004:167) who says,

Putting a God-centred view of reality in place of a human-centred view, Barth proclaimed the sovereignty of God, and while theologians such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Reinhold Niebuhr expressed serious reservations about Barth’s work, Barth nonetheless held a strong belief in the authoritative Word of God.

---

<sup>24</sup> Concerning this, Hastings (2004:276) says “[i]f philosophy helps give clearer articulation to the christocentric, trinitarian field of theological inquiry, the theologian is free to utilize its categories *ad hoc*, for example, when Barth uses Hegel or Kant and Torrance uses Polanyi and Wittgenstein.”

Barth and Torrance have something in common: they both begin with “the givenness or actuality of revelation” (Hastings 2004:271). Indeed, Torrance argues,

If God really is God, the Creator of all things visible and invisible and the Source of all rational order in the universe, I find it absurd to think that he does not actively reveal himself to us but remains inert and aloof, so that we are left to grope about in the dark for possible intimations and clues to his reality which we may use in trying to establish arguments for his existence (Torrance 1998a:1).

There is no Christian knowledge of God which does not acquire its ultimate fullness and depth from a revelation of God in the Risen One (Torrance 1998a:74).

Hastings (2004:276) observes that Lindbeck regards Barth, who objects to theological liberals’ “experiential-expressive turn to the subject”, as a model of his cultural-linguistic theory of religion and doctrine (Lindbeck 1984:24), and that he admits that the idea of intratextuality accompanied by his cultural-linguistic approach originated, though not in a direct way<sup>25</sup>, from “Karl Barth’s exegetical emphasis on narrative.” (Lindbeck 1984:135)

Hastings (2004:276) is, however, reluctant to accept Lindbeck’s recognition of Barth as “a proto-postliberal” for the following reasons: firstly, Lindbeck’s “scant and selective use of Barth”<sup>26</sup> seems unfair; secondly, Lindbeck’s claim that there is a connection between Barth’s exegetical emphasis on narrative and the cultural-

---

<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Lindbeck (1984:138) didn’t get the insight on intratextuality from Barth himself; he got it from Kelsey, Ford, and above all Hans Frei.

<sup>26</sup> Lindbeck, for example, does not do justice to Barth’s evaluation of traditional orthodoxy; he highlights Barth’s negative criticism but ignores Barth’s positive assessment. However, Barth really acknowledges both aspects of traditional orthodoxy, that is, the weakness and the strength of it. “The weakness of orthodoxy is not the supernatural element in the Bible; on the contrary, in that lies its strength. It is rather the fact that orthodoxy has a way of regarding some objective description of an element, such as the word “God,” as if it were the element itself” (Barth 1955:x).

linguistic approach to religion and doctrine is not on solid ground<sup>27</sup>. Hastings (2004:276-277) says,

Thus, [Lindbeck's] claim that Barth should be read as an exemplar of the cultural-linguistic model is empty and, as I tried to show by referring to Hunsinger and my Japanese colleagues, not necessarily accepted by Barth scholars.

Hastings attempts to evaluate the postliberal character of Lindbeck's theology, especially from the perspective of Torrance as an interpreter of Barth. According to Hastings (2004:277), Lindbeck's view of doctrine, in particular, is, in terms of methodology and epistemology, unstable because of its adoption of Wittgenstein's "non-theological, philosophical" scheme<sup>28</sup>. Lindbeck's postliberalism seems to represent "the imposition of an external and alien framework of intelligibility on the particular *inherent constitutive* relations which pertain to a field whose parameters are directed by the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ" (Hastings 2004:277). In this regard, Hastings's interpretation of Lindbeck is challenging. For Lindbeck as a postliberal has been known to hold the concept of intratextuality, which means that he objects to that of extratextuality<sup>29</sup>. In this regard, Brockman (2011:87) focuses on the connection between Lindbeck's concepts of "categorical adequacy" and "intrasystematic coherence," saying,

Categorical adequacy follows from Lindbeck's neo-Kantian stance that experience is impossible without a symbol system to express it. By categorical adequacy Lindbeck refers to how well the categories of a system (situation) enable speakers of a religious "language" to make meaningful statements about whatever the religion holds to be most important or ultimately real. ... How, then, is the adequacy of a religion's categories to be measured? Not by

---

<sup>27</sup> Concerning this, see McKenny (2010:131).

<sup>28</sup> Hastings (2004:278) expresses his uneasy feeling toward Lindbeck's adoption of Wittgenstein's ideas as follows: "Lindbeck invites the suspicion that he has too quickly surrendered his clerical robes for an academic hood."

<sup>29</sup> For an example, see Moyaert (2012a). Some scholars replace the term *intratextual* with the term *intrasystematic*. For an example, see Michener (2013:89).

any external standard. Instead, Lindbeck's criterion involves what he calls "intrasystematic coherence."

Moreover, Michener (2013:89) argues that it is the intratextual, or intrasystematic, and performative characters of doctrinal truths which Lindbeck and Barth have in common<sup>30</sup>.

Hastings also observes that Lindbeck's identification of the first-order discourse of Christian faith is different from Torrance's. For Torrance, it is "Jesus Christ himself, the incarnate Son of God", while for Lindbeck, it refers to ordinary religious languages, that is, "liturgical, kerygmatic and ethical modes of speech and action" in a religious community which is distinct from variable doctrinal, theological terms as the second-order discourse (Hastings 2004:277). In Torrance's view, Lindbeck might leave no room for "an objective, transcendent theological referent" (Hastings 2004:277). And in this respect, it may seem that Lindbeck does not come along Barth.<sup>31</sup> Marga (2010:75) describes Barth's concepts of the objective God as follows:

Through the dialectical method, Barth turns the traditional complex of subject-object on its head. Where God was once the object of human subjective thinking, now God is the *Subject* of God's own speaking, And in being Subject, God is a concrete and objective reality to creation, with a freedom from all limits or constraints that human subjectivity could place upon God. The object has become Subject and brings with it a new objectivity, a new *Gegenständlichkeit*.

---

<sup>30</sup> Indeed, scholars such as Topping (2007:211), Webster (2006:62), Mangina (2004:54) and Hunsinger (2000:214), recognize that there is the connection between Barth's theology and the idea of intratextuality. Brennan III (2012:107), in particular, recognizes Barth as an intratextual theologian, but interprets the concept of intratextuality newly as follows: "what I am arguing for is an understanding of intratextuality which is concerned with the relationship (or, again, lack thereof) between different interpretive, semiotic systems through which reality is construed, and not between the relationship of those systems to reality itself. Whether Lindbeck would agree with this understanding of intratextuality is[sic] remains open for debate, but - operating with this understanding for the time being - one thing is, I think, for certain: Barthian theology is as intratextual as any."

<sup>31</sup> According to McKenny (2010:131), Barth is quite distinct from Lindbeck in that Barth believes in the inseparableness between doctrines and transcendent referents that are beyond human senses and reason.



On Barth's notion of the transcendent God, Hopper (2011:240) comments,

Through a major portion of the twentieth century the Swiss theologian Karl Barth offered provocative testimony to such a transcendent biblical God. Barth spoke out on behalf of a "Word of God" in Scripture that broke through the modern, self-assured scholarly investigations into the origins and "religion" of the Bible, offering theological critique of nineteenth-century biblical criticism on the basis of the Bible's own witness to a transcendent, redeeming God.

Hastings, taking Torrance's theological perspective, is not satisfied with Lindbeck's claim to be in accord with Barth's theological position.

### **2.1.6 In the light of pragmatism**

Pecknold (2005: ix) interprets Lindbeck as "the postliberal 'scriptural pragmatist'." Pecknold's observation of "some subtle but profound developments in postliberal theology" since 1985 led him to the recognition that postliberal theology is being transformed, but, at the same time, it always attends to "God's transformative power in the real world, especially through particular, communal practices of semiotic or scriptural reasoning" (Pecknold 2005:ix). Pecknold (2005:x) argues that the ultimate goal in Lindbeck's postliberal theology is to rediscover "a certain kind of pragmatism," which has not been fully developed, yet would be a promising topic in the study of postliberalism. The point of Pecknold's claim to such a pragmatism is that the linguistic pragmatism of Wittgenstein which had a strong influence upon Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine*, has to be supplemented by "an Ochsian-type (Peircean)<sup>32</sup> 'semiotic' or 'scriptural pragmatism' which is able to deal with both the linguistic and non-linguistic mediations of truth, especially through attentiveness to the signs of scripture" (Pecknold 2005:x). This comes from Pecknold's recognition of semiotics as "the most

---

<sup>32</sup> This term might come from the fact that in his work *Peirce, Pragmatism and the Logic of Scripture* (2005), Peter Ochs related "the semiotic pragmatism of Charles Peirce with the logic of scripture" (Pecknold 2005:xi). The American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) is of seminal significance for modern pragmatism.

appropriate category for careful assessments of mediation, both in scriptural and philosophical terms” and as the means of making clear “the complex relationship between scripture and pragmatism” that has always remained “the transformative but frequently neglected heart of postliberal thought” (Pecknold 2005:x). Pecknold (2005:x-xi) looks at Lindbeck through “Augustine’s ‘theo-semiotics’, shaped by his incarnational and trinitarian Word of God theology” in the belief that it can account for “the development of a postliberal ‘scriptural pragmatism’ in ways that take Christians on a journey of intensification (world-description) that simultaneously enables a transformative effect upon communal reasoning (problem-solving) with those who are different.” In brief, Pecknold (2005:xi) intends to transform postliberal theology by focusing on “the christological and trinitarian dimensions of a scriptural pragmatism that is capable of mediating both the repair and renewal of reading communities.” Pecknold (2005:xi) says,

I propose that postliberal theology continue its long-term project of performing communal, biblical reasoning in ways that generate patient, conversational and transformative exchanges within and across cultural-linguistic borders (both religious and secular). This means a subtly different postliberal theology than the one that first emerged in the 1980s. It means a postliberal theology that understands that the witness of the church requires a public, performative mediation of the Word of God, and that requires the church not only to be itself, but to become more itself in seeking the ultimate Kingdom of God whose borders overwhelm those lines of demarcation called church and Israel.

Pecknold’s semiotic postliberal pragmatism can be summarized as follows: firstly, the primary factor of shaping the identity of the community of Christian faith is the biblical narrative, to be precise, the semiotic universe existing in that narrative. Pecknold (2005:5) says,

The scriptural narrative provides ‘narrative speakers’ with a linguistic field of reference that is generative of a certain kind of culture, a certain way of being and communicating in the world, and there, as a result, a strong postliberal emphasis upon good performance.

Secondly, doctrines, as second-order descriptions, reflect upon the practical operation of the “scriptural sign-system” in Christian communal life, as a first-order practice, and simultaneously are, like Wittgenstein’s language, “regulative of the ‘semiotic universe’” existing in the scriptural narrative (Pecknold 2005:5). Pecknold (2005:6) says,

Doctrines, then, both reflect the actual practices of native speaker, and in turn, also have a subtle influence upon first-order practices. In other words, doctrines are primarily descriptive of the way Christians live and speak the language of scripture (especially in liturgical practice) even if these second-order descriptions cannot be neatly separated from first-order practice at all times.

Thirdly, the goal of Pecknold’s semiotic postliberal pragmatism is to rethink postliberal theology by focusing on the issues of mediation, “namely the mediation of signs, of scripture, of church, and in all of these the mediation of the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ” (Pecknold 2005:7). Pecknold (2005:7) aims, by his semiotic approach to postliberal theology, “to gain a certain theological sensibility about what postliberal debates have been about and what transforming them might entail.”

Finally, Pecknold views the relationship between Lindbeck and Wittgenstein from the perspective of pragmatism. Pecknold (2005:34) considers Wittgenstein a philosopher who had an influence on modern discourses on God, especially in Anglo-American theology, such as Fergus Kerr’s work *Theology after Wittgenstein* (1997)<sup>33</sup>. Pecknold (2005:34-35) says,

---

<sup>33</sup> The Scottish Dominican friar Fergus Kerr (born 1931) is a scholar, widely known for his study on Ludwig Wittgenstein and Thomas Aquinas. Kerr (1997:vii) aims to help the readers to recognize these two things: firstly, “they have much more to gain from reading Wittgenstein’s later writings than is commonly supposed”; secondly, “they are in a good position to understand them.” Ashford (2007:363) says that in the same work, Kerr’s main concern is with “Wittgenstein’s rejection of the Cartesian “I”” and “Wittgenstein’s non-empiricist realism” and further with “the relevance and ramifications of all of this for theology.”

Anglo-American theology is now permeated with all sorts of Wittgensteinian assumptions. The assumptions entail the way in which the meaning of something (a word for example) is found only in its ordinary use, only in the way it works in a particular language and culture. This is to take Wittgenstein's grammatical view of theology, or, as he famously put it, to attend to 'theology as grammar'. The nature and function of theology, according to Lindbeck's Wittgenstein, is to use God-talk in an 'intrasystematic' and coherent way – where doctrines are understood through their ordinary use, understood as a working grammar. This is what I call the pragmatic-grammatical view, and what Lindbeck calls cultural-linguistic, and it has become commonplace in modern theology today. In this sense, a new kind of pragmatism has been emerging in theology and religion, but without much critical attention.

In this respect, Lindbeck's dependency on Wittgenstein is not unique: it is just an example of a Wittgensteinian trend in modern theology (Pecknold 2005:34). Nevertheless, Pecknold (2005:34-35) argues that obviously, Lindbeck owed much to Wittgenstein, specifically, Wittgenstein's linguistic pragmatism, and that David Tracy's evaluation of Lindbeck's theological enterprise as a "new linguistic version of one side of classical pragmatism"<sup>34</sup> is an evidence of it. However, Pecknold (2005:35) also points out that there may be a difference between Lindbeck's and Wittgenstein's pragmatisms, especially in terms of realism. Unlike Wittgenstein's pragmatism<sup>35</sup>, Lindbeck's can for certain be said to have "a realist texture to it,"<sup>36</sup> which means that Lindbeck's pragmatism gives support to the existence of "ultimate truth" (Pecknold 2005:35). In Lindbeck, there is no conflict between "pragmatism and realism" (Pecknold 2005:35). This leads to the recognition that Lindbeck's pragmatism is of a "realistic, non-relativistic" character (Pecknold

---

<sup>34</sup> This citation comes from Tracy (1985).

<sup>35</sup> Concerning this, Pecknold says that "[t]hrough some have argued that Wittgenstein can be understood as a kind of realist, Wittgenstein himself did not make such claims, and is probably better understood for helping us to think contextually and functionally about the justification of beliefs."

<sup>36</sup> Pecknold (2005:35) expresses this as follows: "If Lindbeck is a pragmatist – and it is my contention that he is – then he is not only a linguistic pragmatist after Wittgenstein. Indeed, an exclusive commitment to Wittgenstein, despite the heuristic help he gives to Lindbeck's argument, may be too reductionistic for Lindbeck's ultimately realistic claims."

2005:35). And in this respect, Lindbeck's pragmatism is called "a modest realism" (Pecknold 2005:35). Lindbeck's modest realism reflects, above all, scriptural realism in Charles Peirce's pragmatism which might be called Peircean semiotic pragmatism or Peircean scriptural pragmatism.

Pecknold (2005:35) makes a general assessment of Lindbeck's pragmatism as follows:

Whatever kind of pragmatism Lindbeck's work may suggest, it will be at a minimum modestly realist with respect to truth, and it will be contextualist (cultural-linguistic) with respect to doctrines and beliefs, and it will be pragmatic when it comes to use, practice and performance. This sets Lindbeck apart from some pragmatists in making him a realist. But the most important aspect of his pragmatism is that it is a 'scriptural pragmatism' that has theological concerns at heart.

Horton (2011:208-209) points out the recent doubting mood about the general recognition that Lindbeck's pragmatism is postliberal, referring to George Hunsinger, Kevin Vanhoozer and Colin Gunton as its examples. Hunsinger considered Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model to be interpreted as a neoliberal pragmatism rather than a postliberal one, on the ground of his judgment that pragmatism is basically connected with liberalism. Vanhoozer examined some evangelicals' uses of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model to find an oddity in it. It bears some resemblance to the experiential-expressivist model of which he is critical. Gunton argued that the ultimate target of Lindbeck's attack through his critique of the cognitive-propositionalist model is not a doctrinal proposition itself but our reliance on religious traditions. Gunton (1995:12) says,

The heart of the problem is not the proposition, but our tenuous hold on the tradition. Modernity has made doubters of us all, has appeared to cut such a breach between ourselves and our credal past that we do not know whether there is a faith once delivered to the saints, or at least whether we may appeal to it. ... The problem is not that the propositions with which we are concerned are static; it is that they have been called into question.

Like these three theologians, Horton suggests that there is an affinity between the cultural-linguistic model as Lindbeck's position and the experiential-expressivist model as theological liberals' position. Horton (2011:208) says,

As appropriated by some evangelical theologians, Lindbeck's theory is taken to mean that the principal objective of Scripture is not to deliver true doctrine but to generate authentic religious experience and to offer practical imperatives for daily living. At the end of the day, Lindbeck's proposal seems to share with the experiential-expressivist view an equivocal account of doctrine. In spite of certain affinities to Barth, Lindbeck seems no less reticent to identify God as the object of theology than Kant was.

According to Horton (2011:207), Lindbeck's account of the cognitive-propositionalist model reflects Karl Henry's particular position, which means that it does not cover the "positions from the more nuanced perspectives of Protestant orthodoxy and its more recent proponents."<sup>37</sup> Horton (2011:207-208) also points out that for Lindbeck, the primary source of the authority which doctrine has, is the church "because the church has determined its own grammar"; in other words, like Kantian liberalism, Lindbeck's model never offers any space for "the divine warrant beyond ecclesial sanction." Horton (2011:208) says,

Where Paul teaches that all Scripture is "profitable" *because* it is "breathed out by God" (2Ti 3:16), Lindbeck seems to argue the reverse. A doctrine is "categorically true" when it is "rightly utilized." And its ontological ("propositional") truth depends on its categorical truth. Systematic theology, then, is the attempt "to give a normative explication of the meaning a religion has for its adherents."

---

<sup>37</sup> In this regard, McGrath (1990:18), an evangelical, also judges Lindbeck's criticism of the propositional-cognitivist model to be unjustifiable because of his "unsympathetic and somewhat dismissive" attitude against the model, based on a wrong identification of the model with "a crudely realist approach to theological statements" or "a crude correspondence theory of truth." McGrath (1990:18, 20) points out that "such a crude correspondence theory of truth" just reflects the neo-scholastic view of revelation that "supernatural revelation transmits conceptual knowledge by means of propositions," and thus it is "neither a necessary consequence nor precondition" of the propositional-cognitivist model.

### **2.1.7 In the light of public ethics**

Hollenbach (2003) defines the characteristics of the twenty-first century as interdependence and pluralism. By interdependence, especially in the realm of religion, Hollenbach (2003:3) means that religious communities today are challenged by “how to relate their distinctive visions of the good human life with the growing awareness that all persons are linked in a web of global interdependence.” On the contrary, by pluralism Hollenbach (2003:3-4) means that we are also living in the religiously and culturally pluralistic world: in other words, in our age, “there is no agreement about the meaning of the good life” and “[i]ndeed the complexity of emerging world realities is leading many communities to seek reaffirmation of the distinctive traditions that set them apart from others.” Hollenbach (2003:6) urges us, especially Christians, to consider how to relate our religious belief to public life and ethics while paying regard to the value of civility and having respect for different religious convictions of diverse religions in the world. One of the reasons why we should do so is that the context of Christianity today is quite different from that of Christianity in the past, especially that of Western Christianity since the sixteenth-century Reformation (Hollenbach 2003:6). Christianity today exists as a religion in a world of interdependent global character, not as the Christendom in Europe with its ambition of colonizing elsewhere. Hollenbach (2003:6) says,

This new context demands that the public role of faith be considered in light of the deepening awareness of religious and cultural diversity of our world.

Hollenbach (2003:6) sets the ultimate goal of his task in finding the way in which Christians never give up the faith of their own while getting involved with someone, or something, to seek for “the common good” necessary for the new context of our age.

Hollenbach (2003:27) pays a particular attention to a finding of the Second Vatican about “new moral understandings arising through a similar growth of insight into the reality of Jesus Christ,” but is concerned about whether the “new organic growth”, to

borrow Hollenbach's expression, can always be judged as appropriate. Hollenbach (2003:27-28) says,

[T]he claim that new insight into the reality of Christ has arisen must face the question of whether one is merely looking in a mirror and projecting one's own experience onto an image of Christ. The issue, then, is how to distinguish between "true and false reform in the church" (to borrow the title of an influential book by Yves Congar).

Hollenbach thinks of George Lindbeck and John Noonan<sup>38</sup> as different responses to his concern. According to Hollenbach (2003:28), Lindbeck is summarized as follows: firstly, the Scripture as a whole tells "the overarching story of the interaction of God with creation, especially with human beings"; secondly, this scriptural story and the meaning, or the identity, of Jesus Christ as he is depicted in that story is "the normative standard in light of which the adequacy and fidelity of all subsequent developments of the tradition are to be judged"; thirdly, thus, [t]he goal of the utmost importance in Christian life, on both the individual and the communal levels, is to seek the conformity to the Jesus Christ portrayed in the scriptural story. Hollenbach thinks that there is a basic agreement between Lindbeck and Noonan except on the following point. For Lindbeck, the scriptural story works toward the Christian community based on it in a unilateral manner. Hollenbach (2003:28) says,

The relation between the biblical story and the form of life of postbiblical Christians is a one-way street: from the Bible to the ways of life of the later Christian community in different historical periods.

For Lindbeck, the most important thing for the Christian community to do is to interpret human socio-cultural realities by the standard of the scriptural story rather than

---

<sup>38</sup> John T. Noonan, Jr. (born in 1926) is currently a Senior United States federal judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, with chambers in San Francisco, California and is well-known for his essay *Development in Moral Doctrine* (1993). According to Hollenbach (2003:25), what Noonan wants to tell through this essay is that we might keep "a sense of moral direction today" by studying history, especially by studying the historical changes in the Christian tradition's teachings on some issues relating to practical morality, such as usury, marriage, slavery or religious freedom.



accommodating scriptural narratives into an extrascriptural framework. Lindbeck (1984:118) says,

More generally stated, it is the religion instantiated in Scripture which defines being, truth, goodness, and beauty, and the nonscriptural exemplifications of these realities need to be transformed into figures (or types or antitypes) of the scriptural ones. Intratextual theology redescribes reality within the scriptural framework rather than translating Scripture into extrascriptural categories. It is the text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text.

Lindbeck's theory mentioned above can be said to reflect upon his theological conviction: "Scripture creates its own domain of meaning" and "the task of interpretation is to extend this over the whole of reality" (1984:117). "[T]he scriptural story is *applied* to the novel social and cultural realities encountered by the postbiblical church" but "[t]hese realities do not, in themselves, contribute to the meaning of Christian faith" (Hollenbach 2003:29).

Noonan, however, disagrees with Lindbeck on the character of the relation of Scripture to the real human world: the former defines it as bilateral while the latter considers it as unilateral. Hollenbach (2003:29) says,

Noonan thinks the process by which such shifts occur is more complex, involving a *mutual* interaction between postbiblical experience and the biblical story.

The theological difference between Noonan and Lindbeck concerning the issue of how Scripture relates to the real human world is reflected in their different understandings of the shift in the attitude toward slavery "from acceptance in New Testament times and through most of the postbiblical tradition to rejection in more recent centuries," how it occurred in the Christian tradition (Hollenbach 2003:29-30). Lindbeck is interested in its application. His conviction is that the scriptural story can practically be newly applied to our changing world, especially without any alteration in meaning. The meaning of the story itself remains unchanged, and thus the newness simply means

that the self-identical scriptural story has been fused with our human world in which it is narrated and renarrated (Hollenbach 2003:29). Lindbeck finally reaches the conclusion that the attitudinal shift toward slavery in the history of Christianity was caused by Christians' new recognition, especially based on their practical experience, that "a stable social order without the institution of slavery was in fact possible" (Hollenbach 2003:29).

By contrast, Noonan's explanation focuses on the insight into the meaning of the scriptural story. According to Hollenbach (2003:29-30), Noonan stresses that while the story has been applied to the changing world, human insight into the meaning of the story itself also underwent changes. It has historically taken time, as evidenced by the example of slavery, to find the correct demands of the Scripture. Hollenbach (2003:30) summarizes Noonan's argument as follows:

The meaning of both poles in the interaction of biblical story and postbiblical society and culture are clarified by each other in an ongoing way. This interaction generates the dynamism of tradition, leading to the sort of changes that Noonan points out.

Hollenbach introduces Lindbeck and Noonan as the postbiblical church's ethical responses to the age of interdependence and pluralism. According to Hollenbach, the critical difference between Lindbeck and Noonan is that the former claims that the scriptural story's relation to the changing world is unilateral while the latter argues that the relation between the two is bilateral.

## **2.2 An evaluation of recent studies on Lindbeck**

Having surveyed recent studies on Lindbeck above, it is clear that there are various perspectives from which he can be viewed. And the variety of perspectives means that there are many possibilities regarding how to interpret him. A question arises about whether any of these perspectives could present a holistic view of Lindbeck. In other words, it is doubtful whether any of them will lead to his ultimate concern. Ultimate

concern here means the concern which grounds, forms and permeates through Lindbeck's special experiences in life, his unique career as a theologian, and his distinctive ideas of theology. In this sense, the term *ultimate concern* might be used interchangeably with the term *hermeneutical core*.

In the next two chapters, chapter 3 and chapter 4, we will focus on discovering Lindbeck's ultimate concern, that is, the hermeneutical core of his theology. This dissertation will suggest a hypothesis on the concern and try to substantiate it. Chapter 3, in particular, will examine and evaluate the strongest possible rival to the suggested hypothesis. Chapter 4, then, will substantiate the hypothesis by two kinds of evidence.

# **Chapter 3. A Quest for the Hermeneutical Core of Lindbeck's Theology (1): an Examination of Lindbeck's Doctrinal Concern**

One of the goals of this dissertation is to discover the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology. To reach this goal, it will suggest and substantiate a hypothesis.

## **3.1 The hypothesis**

The hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology is an ecclesiastical concern, rather than a doctrinal one.

## **3.2 Substantiating the hypothesis**

The process to substantiate the hypothesis will be as follows. Firstly, a possible rival for Lindbeck's ecclesiastical concern as the hermeneutical core will be presented, examined, and dismissed for an obvious reason. This task will be accomplished in this chapter. Secondly, two kinds of evidence will be offered to support the hypothesis: internal evidence and external evidence. The former refers to the evidence which is related to the activities in and achievements of Lindbeck's lifetime and the latter refers to the evidence which can be drawn from a significant feature of the theological movements in which he took part. The former focuses on Lindbeck as an individual, while the latter the wide theological current in which he was involved. The task of substantiating the suggested hypothesis by these two evidences will be achieved in the next chapter.

### **3.3 An examination and evaluation of a possible rival to Lindbeck's ecclesiastical concern**

Concerning the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology, his doctrinal concern needs to be examined. For it might be considered as the strongest possible rival to his ecclesiastical concern. An inquiry into the reason for such a consideration is a major part of the present chapter.

Lindbeck's doctrinal concern appears most obviously in his work *The Nature of Doctrine*. The work is, in a sense, the embodiment of his doctrinal concern. It had a marked impact on modern theology, especially on the modern theological investigation of doctrine. It significantly influenced Alister McGrath (1990) and Vanhoozer (2005). In what follows, Lindbeck's doctrinal concern will first be identified and, then its influence on those two views of doctrine.

#### **3.3.1 A description of Lindbeck's doctrinal concern**

##### **3.3.1.1 A significant feature of Lindbeck's doctrinal concern: the inseparableness of a doctrinal concern from a religious concern**

Lindbeck (1984) does not only cover the realm of doctrine but also that of religion: his doctrinal concern is not confined to the realm of doctrine, but rather extends to that of religion. In other words, Lindbeck's doctrinal concern comes along with his religious concern. For instance, when he categorizes the existing approaches to doctrine in the first chapter he uses the term *theological theories of religion and doctrine*.

The currently most familiar theological theories of religion and doctrine can, for our purposes, be divided into three types (Lindbeck 1984:16).

Even when Lindbeck describes the characteristics of each type, he always uses the term *doctrine* and the term *religion* together.

One of these emphasizes the cognitive aspects of religion and stresses the ways in which church doctrines function as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities. ... A second approach focuses on what I shall call in this book the “experiential-expressive” dimension of religion, and it interprets doctrines as noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations. ... A third approach, favored especially by ecumenically inclined Roman Catholics, attempts to combine these two emphases. Both the cognitively propositional and the expressively symbolic dimensions and functions of religion and doctrine are viewed, at least in the case of Christianity, as religiously significant and valid (Lindbeck 1984:16).

Obviously, Lindbeck’s alternative to those three types is aimed at covering the areas of both religion and doctrine. He says,

This general way of conceptualizing religion will be called in what follows a “cultural-linguistic” approach, and the implied view of church doctrine will be referred to as a “regulative” or “rule” theory (Lindbeck 1984:18).

He also says,

Furthermore, all the standard theological approaches are unhelpful. The difficulties cannot be solved by, for example, abandoning modern developments and returning to some form of preliberal orthodoxy. A third, a postliberal, way of conceiving religion and religious doctrine is called for (Lindbeck 1984:7).

Lindbeck (1984:7) believes in the interdependence and inseparableness of doctrine and religion.

Lindbeck (1984:7-8) argues that his theory of religion comes as a consequence of interdisciplinary studies, including philosophy, linguistics, sociology, and anthropology, etc., but it would be a great help not only to the non-theological study of religion but also to Christian theological programmes. Lindbeck (1984:8) says,

What is new about the present work, in short, is not its theory of religion, but the use of this theory in the conceptualization of doctrine, and the contention that this conceptualization is fruitful for theology and ecumenism.

Lindbeck's emphasis on the interdependence and inseparableness of doctrine and religion finally makes scholars feel free to reduce the words *religion and doctrine*, or *doctrine and religion*, to the word *doctrine*. For instance, McGrath (1996b:26) says,

Lindbeck suggests here that theories of doctrine may be divided into three general types.

Placher and Vidu also say respectively,

He proposed three models of how doctrines work (Placher 1997:346).

I have already discussed Lindbeck's distinction between and criticism of the two models of doctrine, the cognitive-propositional and the expressive-experiential (Vidu 2007:157).

It can, therefore, be said that Lindbeck's doctrinal concern has a religious concern-embracing character: it always coexists with his religious concern.

### **3.3.1.2 A sketch of Lindbeck's view of doctrine**

Lindbeck (1984:16) divides "the currently most familiar theological theories of religion and doctrine" into three categories: the propositional-cognitivist type, the experiential-expressivist type and the combining type of these two types. The propositional-cognitivist type stresses both the cognitive aspects of religion and the informative or truth-claiming function of doctrine (Lindbeck 1984:16). It was traditionally adopted by orthodox Christian communities, and even by heterodox ones, and it is still reflected in contemporary "Anglo-American analytic philosophy", precisely in its view of religion, which emphasizes "the cognitive or informational meaningfulness of religious utterances" (Lindbeck 1984:16). According to the experiential-expressivist type, doctrines are "noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations" (Lindbeck 1984:16). With its emphasis on the aesthetic

aspect of religions, this type has certain congenialities to Schleiermacherian liberal theologies (Lindbeck 1984:16). The third “two-dimensional” type of combining these two types takes both the cognitive-propositionalist and the expressive-symbolic aspects of religion and doctrine “as religiously significant and valid” (Lindbeck 1984:16). This type has been strongly affected by Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan and is chiefly supported by Roman Catholics with its preoccupation with ecumenism (Lindbeck 1984:16).

The problem is that all of these three types are not satisfactory ways for Lindbeck’s ultimate goal, that is, “to envision the possibility of doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation” (Lindbeck 1984:16). The following are the reasons for such a negative assessment. To begin with, the propositional-cognitivist type claims that the truth-value of a doctrine remains unchanged: “[I]f a doctrine is once true, it is always true, and if it is once false, it is always false” (Lindbeck 1984:16). So, it is impossible to harmonize the historic affirmations and denials of a doctrine. To illustrate, a harmonization of the historically opposite positions on transubstantiation can be made “only if one or both sides abandon their earlier positions” (Lindbeck 1984:16). For the propositional-cognitivists, each doctrine has a particular, fixed meaning of its own (Lindbeck 1984:17). Neither do the experiential-expressivists reach doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation. Contrary to the propositional-cognitivists, they believe that a doctrine can change without variation of meaning, and, conversely, meaning of a doctrine can change without alteration of the doctrine itself (Lindbeck 1984:17). In other words, in their sight, a doctrine does not stick to any particular meaning. Lindbeck (1984:17) says,

The general principle is that insofar as doctrines function as nondiscursive symbols, they are polyvalent in import and therefore subject to changes of meaning or even to a total loss of meaningfulness, to what Tillich calls their death. They are not crucial for religious agreement or disagreement, because these are constituted by harmony or conflict in underlying feelings, attitudes, existential orientations, or practices, rather than by what happens on the level of symbolic (including doctrinal) objectifications.



It might, therefore, be possible to conclude that “[b]oth transubstantiationist and nontransubstantiationist conceptualities” concerning transubstantiation, let alone both Buddhist and Christian teachings about truth, refer ultimately to the same experience despite the difference, even the oppositeness, between their expressions (Lindbeck 1984:17). For the experiential-expressivists, doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation is basically not a matter of significance. The third two-dimensional type is also unfit for Lindbeck’s goal, that is, to open the possibility of doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation. It might be regarded as the alternative to the first one-dimensional types in that it can cover “both variable and invariable aspects of religious traditions” because of its combining character of “cognitivist and experiential-expressive perspectives” and, most importantly, does not “a priori exclude doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation” (Lindbeck 1984:17). Nevertheless, it has some shortcomings: firstly, in terms of the quality of combination, its coherent combination of those one-dimensional types is not easy to expect, as in the cases of Rahner and Lonergan who both leaned on “complicated intellectual gymnastics”; secondly, it cannot easily determine “when a given doctrinal development is consistent with the sources of faith,” and thus, in a moment of making a decision in such a matter, it falls back on “the magisterium, the official teaching authority of the church,” to a much higher degree “than all Reformation Protestants and many Catholics consider desirable”; thirdly, its claim to doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation is based on flimsy grounds (Lindbeck 1984:17). In short, none of these three types is suitable for Lindbeck’s goal, which means that, traditional theories of religion and doctrine represented by these three types are generally unfit for Lindbeck’s goal.

Thus, Lindbeck (1984) seeks for an alternative to such traditional theories of religion and doctrine.

There would be less skepticism about ecumenical claims if it were possible to find an alternative approach that made the intertwining of variability and invariability in matters of faith easier to understand. This book proposes such an alternative (Lindbeck 1984:17).

Finally, Lindbeck proposes so-called cultural-linguistic approach as his own view of religion and doctrine. This approach, above all, focuses on the function of doctrine as *use*, not on the experiential-expressivist, symbolic aspect or the propositional-cognitive, informational aspect of doctrine, but on the communally regulative aspect of doctrine. Lindbeck (1984:18) says,

The function of church doctrines that becomes most prominent in this perspective is their use, not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action. This general way of conceptualizing religion will be called in what follows a “cultural-linguistic” approach, and the implied view of church doctrine will be referred to as a “regulative” or “rule” theory.

The cultural-linguistic approach reflects a trend prevalent in modern academic circles including “anthropological, sociological, and philosophical literature,” that is, to neglect the function of religions as truth-claims or expressive symbols; instead, to emphasize the functional similarity of religions both to languages carrying “their correlative forms of life” and to cultures as semiotic “reality and value systems” or as “idioms for the construing of reality and the living of life” (Lindbeck 1984:17-18).

Lindbeck (1984:17-18) argues that although it was just recently that the elements of the cultural-linguistic approach were known to theologians, especially ones who struggled with the anomalies found in modern church history, it, unlike the traditional approaches mentioned above, can be the means to accomplish his goal. The following is an illustration of how the rule, or regulative, theory, which is the core of the cultural-linguistic approach, can explain the possibility of doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation.

[T]he rules “Drive on the left” and “Drive on the right” are unequivocal in meaning and unequivocally opposed, yet both may be binding: one in Britain and the other in the United States, or one when traffic is normal, and the other when a collision must be avoided. Thus oppositions between rules can in some instances be resolved, not by altering one or both of them, but by specifying when or where they apply, or by stipulating which of the competing

directives takes precedence. Similarly, to return to the eucharistic example, both transubstantiation and at least some of the doctrines that appear to contradict it can be interpreted as embodying rules of sacramental thought and practice that may have been in unavoidable and perhaps irresolvable collision in certain historical contexts, but that can in other circumstances be harmonized by appropriate specifications of their respective domains, uses, and priorities (Lindbeck 1984:18).

Lindbeck (1984:18) argues that a thorough examination of “a pattern of reasoning often found in ecumenical agreements” leads us to the conclusion that “[d]octrines may be talked about in these agreements as if they were propositions or, in some cases, nondiscursive symbols, but they are treated as if they were rules or regulative principles.” According to Lindbeck (1984:18-19), the attempt to understand doctrines as rules is not novel because, since the age of the early church till today, there has been the insight of the “*regulae fidei*” and the recognition “that the operational logic of religious teachings in their communally authoritative (or, as we shall simply say, doctrinal) role is regulative. Lindbeck (1984:19) does not disregard the function of doctrines as truth-claims or expressive symbols, but he expresses his opinion of it as follows. Doctrines can just function as symbols to the exclusion of their propositional or regulative aspects, “as Tolstoy observed with puzzlement among Russian peasants,” or they can operate properly even with their symbolic or liturgical roles minimized, as seen in the case of Old-style Calvinists who took Nicaenum as a sign of their identity but did not make the chanting of *Symbolum Nicaenum*, *the Nicene Creed*, as a part of their eucharistic liturgy (Lindbeck 1984:19). Most importantly, however, doctrines or creeds may function as rules, not as propositions (Lindbeck 1984:19). Lindbeck (1984:19) says,

Doctrines regulate truth claims by excluding some and permitting others, but the logic of their communally authoritative use hinders or prevents them from specifying positively what is to be affirmed.

According to Lindbeck (1984:19), it can thus be said that “the Nicaenum in its role as a communal doctrine does not make first-order truth claims.”

In sum, Lindbeck refuses three traditional theories of religion and doctrine and, instead, proposes “a cultural-linguistic approach to religion” and “a regulative view of doctrine.” And, it should be noted that both his refusal and his proposal are related to his goal, that is, to open the possibility of doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation.<sup>39</sup>

### **3.3.2 The influence of Lindbeck’s doctrinal concern on two subsequent theological studies on doctrine**

#### **3.3.2.1 The influence of Lindbeck on McGrath (1990)**

##### **3.3.2.1.1 An analysis of McGrath (1990)**

###### **3.3.2.1.1.1 The structure and the theological significances of McGrath (1990)**

Alister E. McGrath begins his work *The Genesis of Doctrine* (1990), critically engaging the views of George Lindbeck on doctrine before moving on to present a fresh understanding of the nature and function of Christian doctrine within the church. Particular attention is paid to the way in which doctrine acts as a demarcator between communities of faith, providing important insights into contemporary ecumenical debates. McGrath also explores the crucial issue of the authority of the past in Christian theology, focusing especially on how doctrine serves to maintain continuity within the Christian tradition. McGrath (1990) represents an exploration of a "middle way" in relation to the significance of Christian doctrine, rejecting both those approaches that insist on the uncritical repetition of the doctrinal heritage of the past and those that disallow the authority of doctrinal formulations of the past. McGrath (1990) concludes by considering whether doctrine has a future within the church, answering this question in the affirmative on the basis of a number of important theological and cultural considerations.

---

<sup>39</sup> Lindbeck (1984:19) makes a significant remark that both the cultural-linguistic approach to religion and doctrine and the regulative theory of doctrine have some bearing on ecumenicity. In this respect, his goal may be said to ultimately seek ecumenicity.

### 3.3.2.1.1.2 McGrath's primary concern which is found in *The Genesis of Doctrine*

McGrath focuses on so-called *doctrinal criticism*. That discipline aims at evaluating “the reliability and adequacy of the doctrinal formulations of the Christian tradition,” by identifying their represented objects, inquiring into their social backgrounds, and establishing criteria for evaluation and correction of them (McGrath 1990:vii). McGrath's real focus, however, is not on doctrinal criticism itself but on its foundations<sup>40</sup>. And those foundations concern the following three interrelating questions.

What pressures and factors cause the generation of doctrinal formulations?  
What *is* doctrine, anyway? And what authority is to be ascribed to the heritage of the past in Christian doctrinal reflection? (McGrath 1990:viii)

McGrath's interest in the foundations of doctrinal criticism arose through his early studies: firstly, his study over a decade on “the history of the development of one specific doctrine (the doctrine of justification) within the western Christian tradition” and, secondly, his study on “the intellectual origins of the Reformation” (McGrath 1990:vii).

In brief, McGrath is primarily interested in “the foundations of doctrinal criticism” (McGrath 1990:viii).

In effect, the present work may be regarded as a study in the foundations of doctrinal criticism, anticipating a more substantial subsequent engagement with the discipline. However tentative and provisional the probings of this work may prove to be, it is hoped that it will stimulate discussion of questions such as those noted above (McGrath 1990:viii).

---

<sup>40</sup> The original title of *The Genesis of Doctrine* is *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism*.

### 3.3.2.1.1.3 McGrath's view of doctrine which is expressed in *The Genesis of Doctrine*

McGrath's view of doctrine may be summarized as follows. Firstly, history plays a decisive role in generating doctrine. McGrath (1990:35) says,

The history of Jesus of Nazareth may be regarded as the precipitating or generative event of Christian doctrine.

According to McGrath (1990:35), doctrine is generated by a "community of faith" and "its foundational narrative" as well, and that community and that narrative are, in turn, grounded, "at a purely historical level", on "the history of Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>41</sup> Doctrine, however, does not identify itself as "a purely historical account of its origins", which means that it, by nature, has "both the existential and ontological" implications (McGrath 1990:35).

Against the Enlightenment's claim that truth must be grounded on the ahistorical, universal and objective rationality rather than on the historical, particular and contingent event, McGrath maintains, by the aid of historicism<sup>42</sup> and the sociology of knowledge<sup>43</sup>, that Christian faith, and even Christian doctrines, is ultimately based on the historical event of Jesus of Nazareth<sup>44</sup>.

---

<sup>41</sup> McGrath (1990:35) admits that his attempt to identify "Jesus of Nazareth" with "the historical source of both the community of faith and its foundational narrative" perhaps resembles that of "Liberal Protestantism".

<sup>42</sup> According to McGrath (1990:92), three points of importance are made concerning historicism. They are the historically located human thoughts, the vitalness of historical insight for human self-understanding, and the improperness and impossibility of our fleeing from history. McGrath (1990:86) also mentions that historicism has its own problem, that is, the so-called cultural relativism.

<sup>43</sup> The sociology of knowledge focuses on the "*Sitz im Leben* of knowledge," insisting "that no human thought is exempt from the pervasive influence of ideology" (McGrath 1990:91). It may, however, fall into a "totally agnostic epistemology" or "a corollary of relativism" (McGrath 1990:94).

<sup>44</sup> For the anti-history character of the Enlightenment, or the Enlightenment's objection to historical truth, see Weber (1983:3-6). And for McGrath's criticism of the ahistorical tendency in the Enlightenment and its subsequent theological movement, the so-called theological liberalism, see McGrath (1990:81-103).

Secondly, reductionism must be avoided.<sup>45</sup> McGrath (1990:35) describes it as follows:

Phenomena must be capable of being reduced to their bare essentials, with all hints of complexity and ambiguity eliminated. They must be amenable to being dismantled to yield a simple univocal conceptual structure.

According to McGrath (1990:35), his contemporary theology may be said to incline toward such a reductionism as described. In other words, theological criticisms in his day, though not all, tend to be “inattentive to the history of Christian thought, perhaps occasionally even to the point of near-total disengagement, failing to render a sufficiently nuanced account of the historical development of doctrine as a historical phenomenon, and the specific roles allocated to doctrinal formulations in the history of the Christian church” (McGrath 1990:35).

McGrath has, particularly, two reasons for his objection to reductionism<sup>46</sup>. Firstly, Christian doctrine is by nature “an integrative concept”, incorporating “a number of elements into a greater whole” (McGrath 1990:36). Secondly, the reductionist approach has historically lost “much that is essential to Christian self-understanding”, while attempting “to render doctrine – or, more accurately, a truncated and idealized reconstruction of the concept – intelligible to outsiders” (McGrath 1990:36).

In brief, reductionism concerning doctrine may fall into “simplistic theories of doctrine”, which will finally cause the loss of “the multifaceted character of doctrine as [a] historical phenomenon” (McGrath 1990:36). McGrath (1990:37) says,

---

<sup>45</sup> In terms of reductionism, McGrath assesses Lindbeck’s theory of doctrine. See McGrath (1990:34). There McGrath assesses it as a “strongly reductionist analysis at the cost of failing to interact fully with the phenomenon in question.”

<sup>46</sup> The objection to reductionism does not only apply to McGrath’s view of doctrine but also to his view of revelation. “Revelation is God’s self-disclosure and self-involvement in history, and supremely God’s decision to become incarnate in Jesus Christ, so that whoever has seen Jesus Christ has seen the Father. Revelation concerns the *oracles* of God, the *acts* of God, and the *person and presence* of God. To reduce revelation to principles or concepts is to suppress the element of mystery, holiness and wonder to God’s self-disclosure” (McGrath 1996a:107).

It is my contention that such reductive theories demonstrate an inherent tendency to deal with an idealized and historically abstracted conception, rather than [a] historical and social phenomenon.

Thirdly, the following four theses can be stated concerning doctrine, more accurately, the nature of doctrine: firstly, “doctrine functions as a social demarcator”; secondly, “doctrine is generated by, and subsequently interprets the Christian narrative”; thirdly, “doctrine interprets experience”; fourthly, “doctrine makes truth claims” (McGrath 1990:37). According to McGrath (1990:37), they may possibly result from an unbiased historical analysis of Christian doctrine as a “historical and social phenomenon”.

The first thesis implies that doctrine plays a role in identifying a community of faith as a social entity, and thus in distinguishing it from others. McGrath (1990:38) says,

[Doctrine] serves as a means of creating a sense of social identity, shaping the outlook of a community and justifying its original and continued existence in the face of rival communities with comparable claims. It assists in defining both the limits of, and the conditions for entering, such a community. Effective social cohesion requires the fixing of boundaries, and the sense of community identity. Doctrine is one such social demarcator, serving to enhance the sense of identity of a community, and facilitating its distinction from other communities. Other means of social demarcation associated with the Christian communities (such as the sacraments) have a clear doctrinal component.

We must, however, avoid the following misconception about the first thesis: doctrine causes an improper and unessential division of society, that is, it always produces a schism or a disharmony rather than a unity (McGrath 1990:48).

In brief, the first thesis basically concerns ‘what doctrine *is*’ rather than ‘what it *ought to be*’ (McGrath 1990:48). McGrath (1990:48) says,

It would, however, be more accurate to suggest that doctrine does not necessarily divide in itself; it may merely give expression to differences which



already exist, in order that these may be confronted, assessed and possibly resolved.

The second thesis focuses on the role of doctrine as a communal interpretation of the scriptural narrative of Jesus of Nazareth, which is “the foundational and controlling narrative” of the Christian community (McGrath 1990:55). Between the narrative and doctrine are some special relationships. Firstly, the narrative is primary, and doctrine is secondary. McGrath (1990:58-59) says,

Doctrine provides the conceptual framework by which the scriptural narrative is interpreted. It is not an arbitrary framework, however, but one which is suggested by that narrative, and intimated (however provisionally) by scripture itself. It is to be discerned within, rather than imposed upon, that narrative. The narrative is primary, and the interpretative framework secondary.

Secondly, the narrative and doctrine are in “a process of dynamic interaction, of *feedback*” consisting of a “hermeneutical spiral” and “a progressive interactive oscillation” (McGrath 1990:60-61). McGrath (1990:60) says,

That narrative possesses an interpretative substructure, hinting at doctrinal affirmations. It is evident that there are conceptual frameworks, linked to narrative structures, within scripture: these function as starting points for the process of generation of more sophisticated conceptual frameworks in the process of doctrinal formulation. On the basis of these scriptural hints, markers and signposts, doctrinal affirmations may be made, which are then employed as a conceptual framework for the interpretation of the narrative. The narrative is then re-read and re-visioned in the light of this conceptual framework, in the course of which modifications to the framework are suggested.

The third thesis is, in a sense, McGrath's answer to the question as to whether or not doctrine can express experience<sup>47</sup> properly. According to McGrath, human words by origin set a limitation in themselves: they "cannot adequately define experience" and neither can they give "a total description of that experience" (McGrath 1990:66). Nevertheless, words may function "as signposts" to point to experience<sup>48</sup>, which means that they "point beyond themselves, to something greater which eludes their grasp" (McGrath 1990:67). McGrath (1990:67) says,

Human words, and the categories which they express, are stretched to their limits as they attempt to encapsulate, to communicate, something which tantalizingly refuses to be reduced to words. ... Experience and language point beyond themselves, testifying that something lies beyond their borderlands, yet into which we tantalizingly cannot enter.

Likewise, it can be said that doctrine as a linguistic construction points beyond itself to the communal Christian experience, although it cannot fully describe the experience.

McGrath (1990:70) also observes "the principle of the communicability of emotion and feelings *through* words, despite their innate irreducibility *to* words". According to the principle,

The communal Christian experience may be communicated verbally to those who have yet to discover it, in such a manner that an individual may, in the first place, experience it, and in the second, subsequently recognize this experience for what it is (McGrath 1990:70).

---

<sup>47</sup> According to McGrath (1990:66), 'experience' here does not refer to "a universal private experience, common to all religions" to which theological liberals since Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) have adhered; rather, it has relation to "a communal experience within the Christian community".

<sup>48</sup> In relation to this, McGrath's claim that "there is a resonance between words and experience" has a deep significance (McGrath 1990:69).

The principle applies equally to the relation between doctrine and experience. They must not be considered as separate from each other<sup>49</sup>.

The cognitive dimension of Christian doctrine is the framework upon which Christian experience is supported, the channel through which it is conveyed. It is a skeleton which gives strength and shape to the flesh of experience (McGrath 1990:71).

The fourth thesis reflects McGrath's belief that Christian doctrine results from "a communal claim to possession of significant true insights concerning God and humanity" (McGrath 1990:72-73). In particular, McGrath's view of Christian doctrine as a truth-claim<sup>50</sup> emphasizes some points: firstly, doctrine is primarily related to "[a] historical event, rather than any static or timeless concepts." In other words, it is "a representation, however inadequate or provisional," of the reality of things, which is basically considered to be a "response to the questions arising from the history of Jesus of Nazareth"<sup>51</sup>; secondly, the event is communicated "in a narrative form, in a literary form which can structurally express time and history". Doctrine is generated by, and interprets such a history-conveying narrative<sup>52</sup>; thirdly, doctrine is associated with "the internal consistency of Christian truth-affirmations."<sup>53</sup>; fourthly, doctrine has a faith-seeking character, which means that doctrine ultimately demands "personal involvement, rather than passive assent". In other words, doctrine has a "subjective or existential dimension"<sup>54</sup>, opening up "the possibility of encountering the truth" and

---

<sup>49</sup> In this respect, McGrath (1990:71) opposes Lindbeck, because Lindbeck treats the cognitive and the experiential approaches to doctrine as "antithetical".

<sup>50</sup> According to McGrath, his view of doctrine as a truth-claim is based on his consideration of doctrine's association with the concepts of three classical terms referring to truth, that is, the Greek term *aletheia*, the Latin term *veritas* and the Hebrew term *emunah*. For this, see McGrath (1990:73-74).

<sup>51</sup> McGrath (1990:75) declares that "there is an implicit Christological reference within the truth-claims of Christian doctrine".

<sup>52</sup> In this respect, the questions of both "the veridical character" of narrative and the "rational and comprehensively elucidative character of doctrine are matters of great importance (McGrath 1990:76-79).

<sup>53</sup> In this regard, McGrath basically agrees with both Lindbeck and Schleiermacher. See McGrath (1990:77-78).

<sup>54</sup> According to McGrath (1990:78), this dimension of truth that is already found in the scriptural narrative, reminds us of Kierkegaard.

demanding “an inwardly-appropriated and assimilated response to it”; fifthly, despite their ontological difference, doctrine and truth have “significant affinities, points of contact and parallels” with each other.<sup>55</sup> In other words, in terms of the spectrum of meaning, we can find “such a degree of overlap between” the spectra covered respectively by the concepts of doctrine and truth that it is significant and reasonable to maintain the notion of doctrine as truth-claims.; lastly, doctrine performs a social function. In other words, it establishes the community of faith through the three processes of generation, sustainment and demarcation (McGrath 1990:74-80).

### **3.3.2.1.2 McGrath’s assessment of Lindbeck’s view of doctrine**

McGrath (1990:viii), above all, acknowledges that prior to McGrath (1990), Lindbeck (1984) played its own role in stimulating theological discussion about the foundations of doctrinal criticism, and that in particular, it focuses on so-called *postliberalism* which Lindbeck initiated. McGrath (1990:viii) adds that whatever our response to Lindbeck’s theory of doctrine may be, it was appropriate and timely for him to point to the urgent need for inquiring into the essence of doctrine. McGrath (1990:viii) says,

Without necessarily subscribing to Lindbeck’s analysis of the current theological mood in North America, or to the particular proposal he advances in relation to our understanding of the nature of doctrine, I am sure that he is correct to suggest that the time is right – if not long overdue – for a careful re-examination of both the nature of doctrine and the role of the past in current theological reflection. Indeed, it would not seem unfair to suggest that serious engagement with precisely such questions is an essential prerequisite to an informed discussion of the nature, purpose and future of Christian doctrine.

He adds,

---

<sup>55</sup> In this respect, doctrine as truth-claim implies that there exists “the significant degree of isomorphism” “between the inherently polyvalent concepts of doctrine and truth” and that, nevertheless, “an[*sic*] historically-informed unwillingness to reduce either concept to univocity” should be kept (McGrath 1990:79-80).

In his slender but greatly appreciated volume *The Nature of Doctrine*, George Lindbeck provides a much needed stimulus to reflection on the nature of Christian doctrine. One of the many merits of this book is the debate which it has initiated over this unjustly neglected aspect of Christian theology, which has assumed new importance recently on account of the impact of the ecumenical movement. It is therefore only proper that this attempt to explore the conceptualities associated with Christian doctrine should begin by outlining and – however provisionally – responding to Lindbeck’s analysis (McGrath 1990:14).

In brief, McGrath places high value on Lindbeck (1984) because it offers a stimulus to contemporary theological debates on the essence of doctrine.

### **3.3.2.2 The influences of Lindbeck on Vanhoozer (2005)**

#### **3.3.2.2.1 An analysis of Vanhoozer (2005)**

##### **3.3.2.2.1.1 The significance of Vanhoozer (2005): a postconservative, canonical-linguistic attempt to overcome Lindbeck (1984)**

Kevin Vanhoozer’s work *The Drama of Doctrine* (2005), is above all based on his analysis of the features of modern times. According to it, we live in “an era of dramatic, even epochal changes (e.g., modern to postmodern; the end of the cold war; religious pluralism)” (Vanhoozer 2005:xiii). Changes also occur in the sphere of theology. He says,

The time is ripe for new convergences and alliances, perhaps even healing, along a significant band of what not so long ago was called the “shattered spectrum” of Christian theology. The two-party system of conservative and liberal no longer seems adequate to describe what is taking place (Vanhoozer 2005:xiii).

Lindbeck (1984) may be understood as a solution to such a new situation in theological circles. He proposes a new way of doing theology, which is called postliberal theology, or postliberalism. It has some significant features, such as a cultural-linguistic

approach to religion and a regulative view of doctrine. Vanhoozer makes much of a strong point of Lindbeck, namely, the emphasis on both the linguistic aspect of doctrine and the function of doctrine as practice, but is not content with Lindbeck's focusing on the cultural dimension of doctrine. Vanhoozer presents his work *The Drama of Doctrine* (2005), as another solution to the present situation in theological circles on the one hand and as an alternative to Lindbeck's postliberal theology on the other hand. Vanhoozer (2005:iii) says,

The present book sets forth a postconservative, canonical-linguistic theology and a directive theory of doctrine that roots theology more firmly in Scripture while preserving Lindbeck's emphasis on practice.

### **3.3.2.2.1.2 Vanhoozer's view of doctrine which is found in *The Drama of Doctrine***

The crucial question which Vanhoozer as a theologian encountered and wrestled with is how to locate doctrine properly in the Christians' practical life. He characterizes doctrine as something to relate the Scripture to our obedience on both individual and communal levels, expecting that there will be a change from the distorted recognition of doctrine to a right one. Vanhoozer's work *The Drama of Doctrine* (2005), is the embodiment of the practical concern in his view of doctrine.

In this work, Vanhoozer first emphasizes the 'continuing' aspect of doctrine. He adds "continuing" to the list of the four essential tasks of theology, that is, "celebrating, coping, criticizing, communicating", claiming that doing theology implies continuing on "the way of Jesus Christ" or "the way of truth and life", not by simply meditating on or making a theoretical statement about it but "by following or embodying it" (Vanhoozer 2005:15). He says,

Christian theology seeks to continue the way of truth and life, not by admiring it from afar but by following and embodying it. Following this way involves more than adopting a certain ethic. More basic than external conformity to a moral code is the disciples' fellowship with the one who is the way. ... The Christian way is not something one can behold (theōreō) or contemplate with

the mind's eye only. Doctrine seeks not simply to state theoretical truths but to embody truth in ways of living (Vanhoozer 2005:15).

Concerning 'continuing on the way of Jesus Christ,' it requires us to use imagination to bridge the gap between the biblical story of Jesus and the story of our own lives. Vanhoozer (2005) stresses the importance of the 'dramatic' dimension of doctrine. In the first place, he gives attention to the dramatic character of the gospel itself. He says,

The gospel continues to be seen (in baptism and the Lord's Supper) and heard (in preaching); these are the means through which Christ becomes present to his people. In a real sense, therefore, we have seen and heard the gospel, in its twofold form of Word and sacrament. What faith seeks to understand is inherently dramatic (Vanhoozer 2005:17).

In the second place, he attributes a dramatic nature to Christian doctrine because it is essentially concerned with how to live faithfully, and its truth-claims are inseparable both from the way of life by which they are embodied and from the person who made them (Vanhoozer 2005:15). He says,

The Christian way is fundamentally dramatic, involving speech and action on behalf of Jesus' truth and life. (Vanhoozer 2005:15).

He continues,

The purpose of doctrine is to ensure that those who bear Christ's name walk in Christ's way. Far from being irrelevant to "life," then, doctrine gives shape to life "in Christ" (Vanhoozer 2005:16).

Noticeably, Vanhoozer (2005:16-17) adopts "the metaphor of the theater" to expound the dramatic dimension of doctrine, as did Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) with

“the theatrical metaphor” in his five volume work *Theo-drama* (1988-2003).<sup>56</sup> Vanhoozer (2005:15) says,

There is, however, another kind of beholding, more active and self-involving, associated not with philosophy but with the theater (theaomai).

He continues,

The metaphor of the theater involves more than theoretical beholding, and this in two ways. First, an audience is more than a group of passive (or impassive) observers. Spectators typically have more than a theoretical interest in the drama as it unfolds on the stage. ... There is thus a degree of emotional and imaginative investment in the kind of beholding that takes place in a theater that goes beyond the disinterested speculation of theorists. Second, and more important, theology is more than a spectator sport. ... [T]he main purpose of doctrine is to equip Christians to understand and participate in the action of the principal players (namely, Father, Son, and Spirit). Theatrical beholding overcomes the theory/praxis dichotomy, then, when it insists on audience participation (Vanhoozer 2005:16).

Vanhoozer (2005:16) believes that emphasis on both the continual and the dramatic characters of doctrine will lead us to grasp “what it means to follow - with all our mind, heart, soul, and strength - the way, truth, and life embodied and enacted in Jesus Christ.” He is also confident that such an emphasis will produce two results: firstly, the recognition of the value of “the cultural-linguistic turn” accompanied by “the emphasis on practice” and, secondly, the discovery of a new way of establishing “the relationship of Scripture (the script of the gospel) and the life of the church (the performance of the gospel)” (Vanhoozer 2005:16).

---

<sup>56</sup> Vanhoozer (2005:17) comments that the word *theo-drama* implies “the action of God”, such as God’s redemption, in which the church is rooted.



### 3.3.2.2 Vanhoozer's assessment of Lindbeck's view of doctrine

Vanhoozer's view of doctrine is named *the canonical-linguistic approach to doctrine*. As the term *canonical-linguistic* suggests, it compares itself with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine. They share the importance of the linguistic aspect of doctrine; nevertheless, they are distinct from each other in that Vanhoozer's focus is on the authority of the Bible as canon while Lindbeck's is on the church as culture. Vanhoozer (2005:10) says,

Though Lindbeck's postliberal proposal initially appears to swing the pendulum of authority back to the biblical text, a closer inspection shows that he relocates authority in the church, that singular "culture" within which, and only within which, the Bible is used to shape Christian identity. Lindbeck accepts Wittgenstein's insight that linguistic meaning is a function of use, and that linguistic usage varies according to the forms of life or practices – cultures - that users inhabit. Hence Lindbeck's key premise: that the experience and the reasoning of the individual human subject is always already shaped by a tradition of language use (e.g., culture). The cultural-linguistic turn is postmodern, then, in its rejection of the modern premise of an autonomous knowing subject.

He continues,

The cultural-linguistic turn characteristic of postliberal and other types of post-modern theology is a salient reminder that theology exists to serve the life of the church. Yet the turn to church practice seems to have come at the expense of biblical authority. The canonical-linguistic approach to be put forward in the present book has much in common with its cultural-linguistic cousin. Both agree that meaning and truth are crucially related to language use; however, the canonical-linguistic approach maintains that the normative use is ultimately not that of ecclesial culture but of the biblical canon (Vanhoozer 2005:16).

In brief, Vanhoozer agrees with Lindbeck on the linguistic approach to doctrine, but he does not agree with Lindbeck on the cultural approach to doctrine. Vanhoozer thus suggests his own way of both adopting Lindbeck's linguistic approach to doctrine and overcoming Lindbeck's cultural understanding of doctrine, and calls it a canonical-linguistic approach to doctrine, whose most distinctive feature is the emphasis on both the authority of the Bible as canon and the status of the Bible as the norm of doctrine.

Vanhoozer (2005:16-17) relates the canonical-linguistic approach to doctrine to a formal and foundational principle of Protestantism since the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, namely, the principle of sola scriptura, in the belief that sola scriptura is essentially not an abstract theory but "a performance practice", that is, "the practice of corresponding in one's speech and action to the world of God." He says,

The supreme norm for church practice is Scripture itself: not Scripture as used by the church but Scripture as used by God, even, or perhaps especially, when such use is over against the church: "And the task of theology is just that: to exemplify the church facing the resistance of the gospel." Canonical-linguistic theology attends both to the drama in the text-what God is doing in the world through Christ - and to the drama that continues in the church as God uses Scripture to address, edify, and confront its readers (Vanhoozer 2005:16-17).

### **3.3.3 An assessment of the attempt to consider Lindbeck's doctrinal concern as the hermeneutical core of his theology**

As examined above, Lindbeck's doctrinal concern is the central point of all his arguments in *The Nature of Doctrine* and has a big influence on subsequent theological studies on doctrine. It might thus be inferred that concerning the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology, it is a possible rival to Lindbeck's ecclesiastical concern. However, this inference cannot be accepted as true: in other words, Lindbeck's doctrinal concern is not the hermeneutical core of his theology. For this, a simple and obvious reason can be given as follows. Lindbeck's doctrinal

concern has a unique existential character: it does not exist for itself but it does for the other. In this respect, it can be regarded as a something-oriented concern; this 'something' refers to his ecclesiastical concern. In other words, Lindbeck's doctrinal concern ultimately seeks an answer to the following question about the role of doctrines in the church in the modern period: What function of doctrines is needed to explain some important changes in modern Christianity?

This book is the product of a quarter century of growing dissatisfaction with the usual ways of thinking about those norms of communal belief and action which are generally spoken of as the doctrines or dogmas of churches. ... We are often unable, for example, to specify the criteria we implicitly employ when we say that some changes are faithful to a doctrinal tradition and others unfaithful, or some doctrinal differences are church-dividing and others not (Lindbeck 1984:7).

Those changes might remind us of Thomas Kuhn's term, *anomalies*, in that they occurred unprecedentedly and unpredictably in the history of modern Christianity. Lindbeck (1984:8-9) says,

Anomalies accumulate, old categories fail, and with luck or skill - both attributed by believers to grace - new concepts are found that better serve to account for the data. If they are not found, the consequences can be intellectually and religiously traumatic. As has already been indicated, the anomalies that concern us have to do especially with the interrelationship of doctrinal permanence and change, conflict and compatibility, unity and disunity, and variety and uniformity among, but especially within, religions. Some of the questions involved in this set of problems have long been discussed under the rubric "development of doctrine," but puzzles have multiplied and become increasingly acute in recent times because of both ecumenical and interreligious trends and the proliferation of foundational, systematic, historical, and pastoral difficulties.

By anomalies Lindbeck (1984:9) means that we need to observe the unpredicted problems in modern times caused by "both ecumenical and interreligious trends and

the proliferation of foundational, systematic, historical, and pastoral difficulties” and to seek a new and better approach to doctrine as a solution to them.

Lindbeck’s doctrinal concern stems from his ecclesiastical, particularly ecumenical, concern, and thus it is not right to deal with the former without considering the latter properly.<sup>57</sup> In this respect, Doyle is right in his argument that Lindbeck has been wrongly treated as “a religious philosopher and social theorist” contrary to “his practical, ecumenical intentions” (Doyle 2005:158). Doyle (2005:158) implies that Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine has been discussed irrespective of its ecumenical, or ecclesiological, moorings and that such discussions finally found their major loci in “fundamental theology and philosophy of religion” (Doyle 2005:158). In this regard, Placher’s comment on Lindbeck’s objection of the propositional-cognitivist approach to doctrine is of significance. Placher (1997:347) says,

It [the propositionalist model] cannot explain cases where participants in ecumenical conversations find that their communities can now agree on a point where they formerly disagreed, without either side admitting to having changed its position.

Placher implies that it was an ecclesiastical concern manifested by Lindbeck’s career as an ecumenist that motivated him to object to traditional approaches to doctrine and to propose the cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine as the alternative to them.

Moulaison (2007:118) also states,

The drive for doctrinal clarity as basic to the ecclesial enterprise is not merely a rationalistic endeavor: indeed, the coherence of doctrinal confession is most fully appreciable within Church practice.

---

<sup>57</sup> According to Pecknold (2005), the primary intention of postliberals’ critique of theological liberalism is “to remove obstacles that hinder the repair of a fragmented church.” It means that the ultimate goal of postliberalism is “to renew the ecumenical imperative for catholic unity and enable the church to be a more authentic witness to God and neighbour. The theological method for achieving such an ambitious agenda became synonymous with the critical term ‘postliberal’.”

In conclusion, Lindbeck's doctrinal concern cannot be identified as the hermeneutical core of his theology.

So far, we have examined Lindbeck's doctrinal concern, the strongest possible rival to the hypothesis of this dissertation, and reached the conclusion that it is not the hermeneutical core of his theology. The next chapter will substantiate the hypothesis by two kinds of evidence: internal and external evidences. As a result, thinking of an ecclesiastical concern as Lindbeck's ultimate concern, or the hermeneutical core of his theology, will be justified.

## Chapter 4. A Quest for the Hermeneutical Core of Lindbeck's Theology (2): an Examination of Lindbeck's Ecclesiastical Concern

The previous chapter determined that a doctrinal concern cannot be regarded as the hermeneutical core of his theology. This chapter deals with the hypothesis of this dissertation: the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology is an ecclesiastical concern. It will attempt to substantiate the hypothesis by two kinds of evidence: internal and external evidences.

### 4.1 Internal evidence

Internal evidence indicates that throughout Lindbeck's life, an ecclesiastical concern has been developing and actively working. An ecclesiastical concern is reflected in all his activities and works and in the historically important events and dialogues in which he participated. Internal evidence implies that an ecclesiastical concern has worked as the groundwork of his theology.<sup>58</sup> Eckerstorfer (2004:399) points out that most of the contemporary theologians only focused on Lindbeck's landmark work *The Nature of Doctrine*, and its heated issues on the interpretation of doctrine. They failed to see its subtitle, *Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. According to Eckerstorfer (2004:400), their failure was mainly due to their habit of reading *The Nature of Doctrine* without taking into consideration "its scope and context." Eckerstorfer's contention is that a detailed study of Lindbeck's biographical life and theological works would lead us to the recognition that he, in his whole life, had an ardent wish for the realization of

---

<sup>58</sup> For a detailed description of Lindbeck's works, see Eckerstorfer (2001:77-236).

“the one church in the postmodern world” and, in this respect, his vision is an ecclesiastical one (Eckerstorfer 2004:400). Eckerstorfer (2004:400) says,

[T]his vision is much more subtle than is generally realized when discussing the postliberal approach primarily associated with Lindbeck.

Eckerstorfer (2004:400) defines Lindbeck as a man living the “life of a globe trotter – both in the geographical and the theological sense.” Lindbeck stayed in Asia, the United States and Europe but his Lutheran identity has remained. He was distressed at “the divisions in the Christian family” and “the lack of interest within the churches and among theologians in overcoming doctrinal differences and, indeed, in the continuity of historic Christianity as such” (Eckerstorfer 2004:400). Lindbeck’s ecumenical effort has two characteristic features: the anxiety about “the secularization and dechristianization” of the Western society on the one hand and the notable “openness to culture” and the willingness “to learn from other disciplines” on the other hand (Eckerstorfer 2004:400). In his route to ecumenicity, Lindbeck set his own goal as respecting the other and the diversity of the church while keeping his identity (Eckerstorfer 2004:400). And this goal was his *modus operandi* and at the same time the fruit of the 50 years of his conversation with Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther (Eckerstorfer 2004:400-401).

The past years of Lindbeck’s ecumenical journey can be divided into three periods: Preparation, Paris and Rome (Lindbeck 2004:389-402). The following are descriptive accounts of each period.

#### **4.1.1 The first period: preparation for an ecumenical journey**

This period consists of two parts. The one is his childhood in China, and the other is his college time in U.S.

#### 4.1.1.1 His childhood in China: an experience of interdenominationalism

In his childhood, Lindbeck had a special experience of living in China as a member of the Christian diaspora.<sup>59</sup> According to Eckerstorfer (2004:401), this experience formed “the basis of the two focal points” of his theological enterprise: “[f]irstly, the struggle of maintaining faith in a situation in which one’s community is a minority proved to be highly formative for him”; “[s]econdly, being raised among competing churches in a non-Christian environment acquainted him from the beginning with the scandal of Christian division as well as the pluralism of religions.” The first focal point might be said to develop into his theological proposal of a cultural-linguistic approach to religion, which is combined with a narrative-based view of Christianity and a regulative, or rule, theory of doctrine (Lindbeck 2006:28), whereas the second one be assessed to motivate his career as an ecumenist.

Young Lindbeck was exposed to a special Christian environment, that is, *interdenominationalism*. Interdenominationalism here means “an interdenominational, international, pan-Protestant missionary culture” around him. It affected him greatly, especially in the spheres of his education and living (Lindbeck 2004:389). He, however, distinguishes interdenominationalism from ecumenism which he has sought for throughout his life. Lindbeck (2004:389) says,

---

<sup>59</sup> Regarding the significance of Lindbeck’s experiences in China, DeHart (2006:8) points out that the seeds of Lindbeck’s recognition of ‘Western modernity not as an absolute and unquestionable horizon nor as the highest culmination of humanity’s intellectual evolution but rather as one historical and cultural epoch among others’, which might be the kernel of his attempt to overcome the limitation of theological liberals’ view of doctrine, namely the experiential-expressivist approach to doctrine, were, presumably, already planted in his childhood in China, which was characterized by ‘the external perspective on Western civilization’ and its ‘relativizing effect’. Lindbeck’s concern for the right Christian identity and the proper boundaries of Christian doctrine, especially between Catholicism and Protestantism were, on the one hand, the basic motives both for Lindbeck’s criticism of the propositional-cognitivist approach to doctrine and for his proposal of the cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine, and they could, on the other hand, be a result from the young Lindbeck’s experience of ‘natural’ yet somehow ‘disorienting’ encounters with Roman Catholics in the alien land of China (DeHart 2006:8).



This interdenominationalism, despite appearances, was not in the least ecumenical, and that has greatly influenced my ecumenism. I have, in short, rebelled against it.

Lindbeck (2004:390) offers an insight on the difference between interdenominationalism and ecumenism: interdenominationalism is similar to ecumenism in terms of enthusiasm for Christian unity, but the former is quite different from the latter in that it is also committed to divided denominations and their own teachings and practices.

With regard to interdenominationalism, Lindbeck introduces as illustration a discussion he had in China. One day, he debated with two Southern Baptist schoolmates on the theological issues of infant baptism, which opened his eyes to the stern realities of interdenominationalism. Reflecting on that day, Lindbeck (2004:390) says,

We were, in short, well indoctrinated in our respective traditions, but it did not occur to us to question the Christian authenticity of one another's central beliefs ... Thus, though we liked to argue, we neither thought we had an obligation to try to convert one another, nor were we tempted to desert the community into which we had been born in favor of some other form of Christianity. What our elders spoke of as the invisible unity in Christ of our respective churches seemed quite sufficient, and the ecumenical seeking for visible unity could just as well not have existed as far as we were concerned.

It is clear that Lindbeck distinguishes between the notions of *the invisible unity* and *the visible unity* of the church, and that the former refers to interdenominationalism and the latter ecumenism.

The missionaries around young Lindbeck were generally involved in the interdenominationalism mentioned above. They were also theologically conservative, seeking for "evangelization and church-planting" (Lindbeck 2004:390-391). Therefore they objected to both ecumenism and modernism. Modernism in the 1920's and 1930's particularly was facilitated by the Harvard philosophy professor William E.

Hocking's work *Re-thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (1932) and had an increasing impact on "the mission boards of mainline denominations and the prestigious missionary-founded universities, medical establishments, and agencies such as the YMCA in the great coastal cities and treaty ports" (Lindbeck 2004:390-391). *Re-thinking Missions* was under the critical criticism of those missionaries because of its reinterpretation of missions as "a political and cultural enterprise aiming at secular progress" (Lindbeck 2004:391). *Re-thinking Missions* holds that evangelism is nothing other than services to "the secular needs of men in the spirit of Christ," and thus genuine success does not mean "gaining converts" but the permeation of "the spirit of Christian service" into "the societies of the East" (Hocking 1932:68-70). *Re-thinking Missions* also maintains that different non-Christian religious traditions have the common goal of final truth. This means that it in a sense anticipated "pluralistic theologies of religion such as those of John Hick, Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, and Diana Eck" (Lindbeck 2004:391). In another sense, it was merely "an outdated document, a climax in the early twentieth century of nineteenth-century optimistic progressivism combined with outlooks similar to those that dominated the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893" (Lindbeck 2004:391). *Re-thinking Missions* also raised doubt to identify the Reign of God with "the generally accepted goals of progressive capitalism at that point in history" (Newbigin 1988:323; Lindbeck 2004:391).

Lindbeck (2004:392) saw that there were two major opponents to both *Re-thinking Missions* and modernism: the fundamentalists worrying about the spread of so-called *modernist cancer*, and the orthodox believing in the creeds and confessions. The latter particularly paid more attention to "the ancient [T]rinitarian and [C]hristological confessions of faith than to the modern fundamental claims. The creedal orthodox didn't necessarily disagree with fundamentalists, but they assumed that the modern fundamental claims are secondary in importance; in other words, they had "a hierarchy of truths" distinct from that of the modern fundamentalists (Lindbeck 2004:392). Lindbeck (2004:392) recalls that it was one of his father's friends, a "creedally orthodox nonfundamentalist," who first had his eyes opened to *Re-thinking Missions*. He was an ardent admirer of Hendrik Kraemer's work *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, which played a decisive role in "rebutting outlooks similar to those of

*Re-thinking Missions at the 1938 International Missionary Council meeting in Tambaram, India*” (Lindbeck 2004:392). Kraemer (1888-1965), a Dutch reformed lay theologian and missiologist, was in the vanguard of the strong opposition to leading contemporary theological liberalism.

The interdenominationalism which young Lindbeck experienced had one important limitation. It was effective just within the communities of pan-Protestant Christians. In other words, it excluded Roman Catholics. And this exclusion was mainly due to traditional Protestant, especially Lutheran, prejudices against the Roman Catholic Church such as the Church’s domination of the consciences of its members, along with the priests’ monopolization and manipulation of “the means of grace,” the Church’s denial of the uniqueness of Christ’s mediatorship “between human beings and God,” the Church’s claim to salvation “through supposedly meritorious works rather than through faith in Jesus Christ alone” and the hierarchy in the Church which promotes “all sorts of superstitious beliefs and practices in order to keep control of the people, especially in unenlightened places such as Spain and Latin America” (Lindbeck 2004:392). During Lindbeck’s childhood, the distrust between Protestants and Roman Catholics who lived in China was serious to the extent that they employed “different words to name the God whom they both worship,” and that they were officially recognized by the Chinese Government “as two different religions” (Lindbeck 2004:392).

In sum, Lindbeck, while staying in China in his childhood, was situated in a special missionary environment named *interdenominationalism*. This interdenominationalism was different from ecumenism, in that, like the latter, the former focused on unity in Christ, but, unlike the latter, it sought for the invisible unity rather than the visible unity and was committed to divisive and denominational doctrines as well as Christian unity.

#### **4.1.1.2 His college time in U.S.: his interest in Roman Catholicism**

For his college education Lindbeck left China for the United States of America in 1940, the year before the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan, and at that time he was a youth of 17 (Lindbeck 2006:28). In the States, he attended a Lutheran college in Minnesota named *Gustavus Adolphus*. There he, a student of philosophy, felt an interest in

“proofs for the existence of God,” and was aware of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) as construed by Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) and Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) (Lindbeck 2004:392). In the course of time, his academic interest has extended from Catholic philosophy to theology, which sent him to Yale Divinity School. Lindbeck (2004:393) describes Protestants’ negative attitude toward Roman Catholics and Roman Catholics’ positive one toward Protestants in those days, especially in the academic field, as follows.

Roman Catholics were in those days producing far more serious scholarship on contemporary Protestant developments than *vice versa*; neoorthodoxy interested them, whereas Protestants had not yet caught on to the importance of *la nouvelle théologie*. Here, so it seemed, was an academic niche waiting to be filled, but in the 1940’s, becoming a specialist in contemporary Roman Catholic developments meant starting with medieval thinkers, especially Aquinas.

At Yale, Lindbeck made a friendship with a devout Catholic. This friendship made him feel “the same sense of oneness in Christ” that he had experienced in his earlier days in China, and motivated him to write an essay on American Catholicism which mainly criticized “Protestants and Other Americans United in Defense of the Separation of Church and State” for their usual anti-Catholic prejudices (Lindbeck 2004:393). On the advice of Franciscans acquainted with him<sup>60</sup>, he left for Paris in 1949 for the purpose of writing his dissertation and listening to the “Paul Vignaux lecture on late medieval thought at the École Pratique des Hautes Études” (Lindbeck 2004:393). Lindbeck (2004:393) pondered on the significance of those days on his ecumenical life, and says,

It was as if my life were being designed in preparation for my later ecumenical work, even though I was oblivious to ecumenism.

---

<sup>60</sup> Those Franciscans persuaded Lindbeck that owing to the Dominican St. Thomas, Duns Scotus was treated unfairly (Lindbeck 2004:393).

Importantly, the emerging neoorthodoxy and the declining Nazism had distinguished “European ecumenism” from “the culture-bound religious progressivism” which the missionaries in China in Lindbeck’s childhood brought into question (Lindbeck 2004:393). He was, however, uninterested in ecumenism because in those days, his concern was only for “relations with Roman Catholics,” and Roman Catholics were not involved in “either interdenominationalism or ecumenism”. To Roman Catholics the aim of ecclesial unity was attainable only “by return to Rome” (Lindbeck 2004:393).

In sum, Lindbeck at Gustavus Adolphus and at Yale, was uninterested in ecumenism because in those days, his concern was mainly for relations with Roman Catholics and Roman Catholics didn’t participate in either interdenominational or ecumenical discussions.

#### **4.1.2 The second period: his ecumenical journey in Paris**

Lindbeck’s stay at Paris in the early 1950’s brought on a change in his interest in ecclesial unity. There he got to know “students from the Faculté Théologique Protestante of the Église Reformé” and “Catholic friends of theirs studying at the Institut Catholique” (Lindbeck 2004:393). However, it was Jean Daniélou (1905-1974) who impressed him profoundly. Daniélou tried to get rid of the Protestants’ prejudice against Catholics’ view of Mary. Lindbeck (2004:394) says,

[H]e tried to convince us that for Catholics in general, and not only for the theological elite, Mary, the mother of God, was not at all a kind of fourth member of the Godhead as we suspected (remember that this was the year of the proclamation of the Assumption as dogma). Rather, she was very much a fellow creature. Invoking her intercessions, as he did regularly, was not all that different, so he said, from asking his own mother for her prayers.

Then, another important encounter was made. Lindbeck (2004:394) became acquainted with “members of the French Catholic *avant-garde*, of whom Daniélou was one,” and who sought “the visible unity of the churches.” Noticeably, they argued that

their goal cannot be reached by a “simple return to Rome,” which shocked Lindbeck into taking a positive view of “ecumenism and of Catholic possibilities of change” (Lindbeck 2004:394). These Catholics concentrated their efforts upon reinterpretation of the return to Rome: return, as Yves Congar (1904-1995), a French Catholic priest and theologian, argued in ‘the first major manifesto of Roman Catholic ecumenism’ in 1937, is possible only “through profound and difficult reforms in Roman Catholicism and not only in the separated churches” (Lindbeck 2004:394). In this respect, Congar’s term *convergence* can be the alternative to return, in that it refers to the state of converging toward a point of full and true integration<sup>61</sup> through helping other churches and through caring for one’s own church (Lindbeck 2004:394). Astonishingly, there were Roman Catholics loyal to their own church who challenged the authorities to put “mutual repentance, renewal, and reform” into practice so as to reach the true unity of churches, which was in opposition to the post-Tridentine view of return to Rome (Lindbeck 2004:394).

Despite their initial weak influence, the French Catholic avant-garde finally caused a change in the Roman Catholic Church’s and the twentieth century Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth’s attitudes toward a new understanding of the visible unity of the church (Lindbeck 2004:394-395).<sup>62</sup> A strange phenomenon also occurred among Protestants in the 1950’s. They took the Catholic avant-garde seriously and set a value even on “the Roman claim to the entire and exclusive possession of the church’s oneness”. This made Jean-Jacques von Allmen (1917-1994), a Swiss Reformed pastor and theologian, see “a reminder of an aspect of the understanding of Christian unity of the Christian scriptures that ecumenically minded Protestants neglect: A mere “federation” of independent churches does not suffice” (Lindbeck 2004:395).

For von Allmen, *independent churches* mean churches “that are not bound to pay attention to one another,” and *federation* being “visibly united in confessing a common faith” (Lindbeck 2004:395). So, despite their theological difference, federated,

---

<sup>61</sup> For Congar, it is proper to say that nobody knows “whether this point is before or at the eschatological end of history” (Lindbeck 2004:394).

<sup>62</sup> Lindbeck (2004:395) says that it was not until after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960’s that Barth began admitting the possibilities of change in the Roman Catholic Church.

independent churches may worship and take Communion together, respect one another's unique orders and points of practical stress in ministry, and cooperate in various kinds of works (Lindbeck 2004:395). Nevertheless, those churches have their own limitation: they have no obligation to care for one another. Lindbeck (2004:295) says,

[T]he denominationally divided churches and missions are free, and feel free, to disregard one another's wishes and concerns whenever they judge it convenient to do so.

Lindbeck (2004:395) judges a federation of independent churches to be like the interdenominationalism he already experienced in China in his childhood. And he, like von Allmen, objects to this federation because of its possible individualistic character. Lindbeck (2004:395) says,

In order to be authentically ecumenical, ... churches must desire and work for something qualitatively different from this interdenominationalism – a unity that not simply sensitizes them but also obligates them to respond to the concerns and requirements of other churches, and thus that curtails their independence and intrudes on their autonomy.

Another attraction of the French Catholic avant-garde was its view on the Reformation (Lindbeck 2004:395). Congar was a representative of this view. He kept a distance from Roman Catholics' stereotypical treatment of Martin Luther as the root of Protestantism and furthermore paid attention to "both the biblical and the traditionally catholic strengths of the Reformers" (Lindbeck 2004:396). Congar's contention was summarized as follows. Firstly, to overcome the Roman Catholic Church's impoverishment caused by the Reformation schism, the Church needs to regain the strengths of the Reformers and reintegrate them "into the Catholic wholeness where, he argued, they properly belong" (Lindbeck 2004:396). Secondly, for this purpose, Protestant churches must also recover those strengths because they have, since the Reformation schism, had a great loss of the Reformers' cherished catholic heritage (Lindbeck 2004:396). In this respect, he welcomed "the neoorthodox renewal". (Lindbeck 2004:396).

In sum, it was the French Catholic avant-garde which opened Lindbeck's eyes to authentic ecumenism. This authentic ecumenism claims that 'return' in the Roman Catholic Church's claim to return to Rome should be reinterpreted as 'convergence.' Convergence here means trying to reach a full and true integration through the mutual help of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches, based on mutual repentance, renewal, and reform. Even some Protestants, like Jacques von Allmen, were in agreement with the French Catholic avant-garde. They object to a mere federation of independent churches because of their possible individualistic character. Lindbeck in Paris was basically in favor of the French Catholic avant-garde's claim to an authentic visible unity of churches. To Lindbeck, another attractive claim of the French Catholic avant-garde was that the Roman Catholic Church must take the strength of the Reformers into the Catholic wholeness of which, the Church argues, they are a proper part. Lindbeck believes that this is the true way of overcoming the impoverishment of the Church since the sixteenth century Reformation division and also an urgent task to be accomplished by modern Protestant churches.

#### **4.1.3 The third period: his ecumenical journey in Rome**

This period consists of three parts: the preconciliar stage, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and the postconciliar stage.

##### **4.1.3.1 The preconciliar stage of this period**

In this stage, Lindbeck had two kinds of encounter: firstly, the encounter with John Courtney Murray (1904-1967), and secondly, the encounter with so-called *evangelical-catholic view*. After returning from Paris to Yale, Lindbeck had the opportunity of serving as Murray's teaching assistant. Murray, "the first Roman Catholic priest ever to teach at Yale," taught there as a visiting professor in the department of philosophy (Lindbeck 2004:396). In the year of 1952 he did not know about ecumenism, but afterwards, he became interested in religious liberty and began to play a key role in producing one of the results of the Second Vatican Council, that is, 'the conciliar Declaration on Religious Liberty' (Lindbeck 2004:396). Lindbeck



(2004:396) states the importance of the Declaration: “[w]ithout the declaration, as is often pointed out, the Decree on Ecumenism would have been null and void in its practical effects.”

According to Lindbeck (2004:396), his career as Murray’s teaching assistant helped him to play a mediating role between the mentality of the delegates to the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran positions on his side of the table at ‘the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue’ after the Second Vatican Council, which was the first officially sponsored meeting from both sides.

In his stay in Europe for his sabbatical year in 1959, Lindbeck met some Lutheran ecumenists, such as the Danish professor K. E. Skydsgaard (1902-1990) (2004:396-397). This meeting opened Lindbeck’s eyes to “a perspective on the relation of Rome and the Reformation,” which finally constituted the main idea of his life and theology (Lindbeck 2004:397). This perspective may be summed up as: “Lutheranism once was and should again become a reform movement within the Catholic Church of the West, rather than a separate ecclesiastical body” (Lindbeck 2004:397). Lindbeck (2004:397) assesses this perspective to be in accord with the spirit of ‘the Augsburg Confession’ (1530), the historically most authoritative doctrinal statement of Lutheran belief except for the catholic creeds established in the age of the early church. The Confession states that there is no sharp conflict between the Reformation and “the catholic consensus of Rome itself” as can be supported at least by the Fathers and their writings (Lindbeck 2004:397). Lindbeck (2004:397) argues that Rome has no right to break their communion with Lutheran churches, that is, the churches of the Augsburg Confession, and that reunion with Rome can be realized so far as the freedom of preaching the Word and of celebrating the sacraments based on the spirit of the gospel is guaranteed. Lindbeck (2004:397) also says that the Confession didn’t object to “the retention of (now, reintegration into) the historic episcopal polity”: It might even tolerate ‘a reformed papacy’ so far as “the primacy of the Roman bishop” is taken “as of human rather than divine right.” This means that Lutherans have no cause to remain a separate ecclesial entity from Rome providing some important changes mentioned above occur in the Roman Catholic Church (Lindbeck 2004:397).

According to Lindbeck (2004:397), it is too much to say that a Lutheran, supportive of the evangelical-catholic view, is none other than a person who defines 'return to Rome' as "a legitimate ecumenical goal." For him/her, it is just the priority ecumenical task, and is, in this respect, the proximate aim rather than the ultimate one. In other words, the success in overcoming "the breach between Rome and the Reformation" will facilitate "the reconciliation of Eastern and Western churches with one another and among themselves" and finally promote the cooperation of Christians in the work of witnessing to Jesus Christ (Lindbeck 2004:397). Lindbeck (2004:397-398) admits that it was this way of thinking which has influenced all his ecumenical activities, including the involvement in 'the Lutheran/Roman Catholic bilateral ecumenism' and the participation in 'W.C.C. multilateral dialogues and interfaith activities.'

Lindbeck (2004:398) observes that this evangelical-catholic view particularly had influence on the church-sponsored bilateral dialogues between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. These dialogues were very productive and successful, especially by the criteria of both quantity and quality. Lindbeck (2004:398) argues that it was possible because Lutheran participants were the ones "with evangelical-catholic sympathies," that is, those who regarded themselves as "representatives of a reform movement within the Catholic Church of the West," and because the Roman participants were also aware of it, and furthermore heartedly respected and tolerated their Lutheran counterparts' view. Lindbeck (2004:398) assesses these dialogues as: "The dominant desire was to work for the good of the other's church as well as one's own. Mutual helpfulness (or, stated more fully, "drawing closer in Christ") was the *leitmotif*." These dialogues showed a "combination of loyalty to one's own community and of commitment to the shared search for unity without which unitive ecumenism cannot flourish" (Lindbeck 2004:398).

In sum, the preconciliar stage of Lindbeck's ecumenical journey in Rome was characterized by his getting acquainted with so-called *evangelical-catholic view*, according to which Lutheran churches are not a separate ecclesiastical body from the Roman Catholic Church but a reform movement within the Church: Lutheran churches' reunion with the Roman Catholic Church can realize in so far as the latter accepts some important changes requested by the former, such as to allow the claim to preach

the Word freely and celebrate the sacraments filled with the spirit of the gospel. This view also newly interprets 'return to Rome' as the priority ecumenical task. To those who support this view, 'return to Rome' is a proximate goal rather than the ultimate one.

#### **4.1.3.2 The Second Vatican Council**

The Second Vatican Council comprises the second part of Lindbeck's ecumenical journey in Rome. About forty Delegated Observers from non-Roman Catholic denominational backgrounds participated in the Council. Among them were three Lutherans, namely, George Lindbeck, the Danish Professor K. E. Skydsgaard and the Hungarian liturgical scholar Vilmos Vajta (1918-1998) (Lindbeck 2004:398-399). Lindbeck with his privileged, ambassadorial status, acted as a liaison between Lutheran churches and the Council (Lindbeck 2004:399).

George Weigel's interview with Lindbeck (1994:44-50) accounts for the reason why Lindbeck participated in the Second Vatican Council. It was because of both the economic situation of the Lutheran World Federation in those days and his personal qualification as a prospective participant in the Council. The LWF was in financial difficulties. The United States was its principal source of funding. The LWF authorities in Geneva decided to select an American as one of their three delegated observers to the Council, and Lindbeck met the qualifications required by them. Some of those qualifications were that the candidate must have a competent knowledge of Latin, German, and French and some experience of Roman Catholicism, and, above all, can have a furlough from his daily job (Weigel 1994:44-50).

The reason for Lindbeck's participation in the Second Vatican Council can also be accounted for by its ecclesiological character. According to Gassman (1990:90), the Council was "an eminent ecclesiological council, a council of the church on the church," on the grounds that all the documents of the Council, especially in their explications and applications, left an apparent ecclesiological trace, and, more importantly, the Council itself had a strong impact on the churches, including the Roman Catholic

Church, and their activities. It might thus be said that the ecclesiological character of the Second Vatican Council made Lindbeck participate in the Council willingly.

Lindbeck (2004:399) recalls that the Council treated Delegated Observers very warmly and showed them the best kindness that it could, such as providing them with the same level of seating as the cardinals and granting them to receive the expert assistance of 'the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity' for a better communication between the Delegated Observers and the Council. The best present offered by the Council to the Delegated Observers was, however, the feeling of pride coming from the fact they joined "the events of worldwide historical importance" and experienced "communally substantive and ecclesially structured oneness in Christ" (Lindbeck 2004:399). Lindbeck (2004:399) says,

Never before in 2,000 years of church history have delegates from separated communions been brought so daringly, so fully, so warmly, and so efficaciously into the supreme counsels of a major Christian body, nor has anything equal to it happened since. For me as for many others, the practice of the search for church unity peaked at Vatican II, and unitive ecumenism has gone downhill ever since.

The Council obviously contributed to the restoration of the relations between Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church, between evangelicals and the Church, and between the conservative Christians and the Church. Lindbeck (2004:399-400) says,

This is true even though communication, cooperation, and understanding between Protestants and Roman Catholics are now unbelievably better than before Vatican II. Not only have the anti-Catholic stereotypes that I earlier described disappeared or greatly weakened in most of Protestantism but also evangelicals and the conservative mainliners who once hated the papists, as they called them, now often find themselves allies with popes on issues that are for them of central Christian importance.

It is noteworthy that official dialogues in the Roman Catholic Church since the Council, especially ones staffed by some of her most trusted thinkers, have had a tendency towards the Augsburg Confession's claim that "the Reformers' main theological concerns can be given authentically Catholic interpretations and therefore need not necessarily be church-dividing" (Lindbeck 2004:400).

In sum, Lindbeck could participate in the Second Vatican Council as a delegated observer because he met the qualifications required by the LWF authorities, and because he might have been attracted by the ecclesiological character of the Council. To him, the Council was very impressive in that it received Delegated Observers with warmth and showed them the best kindness that it could. The Council, in effect, came to considerably reduce the antipathy of Protestants, evangelicals, and conservative Christians to the Roman Catholic Church, and made "official dialogues staffed on the Catholic side by some of Rome's most trusted theologians" accept a unitive view of the Augsburg Confession (Lindbeck 2004:400).

#### **4.1.3.3 The postconciliar stage of this period**

This stage consists of the event of 'the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of justification' on October 31, 1999, the last Reformation Day of the 1900's and the decline of unitive ecumenism since the Second Vatican Council (Lindbeck 2004:400). To begin with, the Joint Declaration meant that the Roman Catholic Church made progress in seeking a unitive ecumenicity.<sup>63</sup> 'The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity'

---

<sup>63</sup> The Joint Declaration regarded the doctrine of justification as an ecumenical problem because historically it prompted the Roman Catholic Church - to be precise, the Roman Catholic Church's Council of Trent (1545-1563) as the Counter-Reformation - to put a doctrinal condemnation on Lutheran churches (Article 1 of the Preamble of the Joint Declaration). The Joint Declaration basically sought to show a possibility that through their dialogue Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church may reach "a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ" (Article 5 of the Preamble of the Joint Declaration). There is, however, a limit to this common understanding: it covered only mutually-consented "basic truths of the doctrine of justification," with "the remaining differences" put aside (Article 5 of the Preamble of the Joint Declaration). Nevertheless, the Joint Declaration was of the conviction that a common understanding of justification is necessary for overcoming the schism of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

Opposing interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification were in the sixteenth century a principal cause of the division of the Western church and led as well to doctrinal condemnations. A common understanding of justification is therefore fundamental and indispensable for overcoming that division. ... [T]he post-Vatican II ecumenical dialogue has led to a notable convergence concerning justification, with the result that this Joint Declaration is

agreed with the Lutheran World Federation on the matter of signing the Joint Declaration. It was a manifestation of the Roman authorities' will to extend unitive ecumenism officially. It peaked at the Second Vatican Council on "the key Reformation doctrine of justification" (Lindbeck 2004:400). Lindbeck (2004:400) says that the Joint Declaration has been generally taken as "the high-water mark of postconciliar *rapprochement*" because it was a matter of great significance, in that "it is the first and, up until now, the only officially accepted result of the many doctrinal dialogues in which Rome has been engaged" (Lindbeck 2004:400). Lindbeck (2004:400), however, judges that in terms of ecumenism, the Joint Declaration did not come up to the standard of the Second Vatican Council.

Then, another feature of the preconciliar stage of Lindbeck's ecumenical journey in Rome was the decline of unitive ecumenism. The postconciliar dialogues started with the hope that they could find ways of overcoming the sixteenth-century schism, more precisely, the conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and Lutheran churches over the issue of how to understand the doctrine of justification which triggered that schism. However, it did not proceed with any great and rapid progress (Lindbeck 2004:400). Lindbeck (2004:400) says,

No one foresaw that it would take decades of labor by hundreds of men and women in many dialogues and consultations throughout the world to articulate these convictions officially. Nor was it foreseen that even an officially successful dialogue such as this one makes little if any practical difference.

Lindbeck (2004:400) points out that this was due to a basic problem beyond the control of the church authorities, quoting Cardinal Walter Kasper that Christians of today are not those of the sixteenth-century: many of them do not realize the seriousness of the misery of human beings as sinners, the fear of God's judgment, and the liberation by the Gospel of justification that Luther did. In other words, the main issues dealt with in the postconciliar dialogues, and in the Joint Declaration, had little significance to

---

able to formulate a consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification. In light of this consensus, the corresponding doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply to today's partner (Article 2 entitled *The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem* of the Joint Declaration).

modern Christians. Disappointment and despair arose among those who sought a unitive ecumenicity.

The following are Lindbeck's evaluation of "the flowering of unitive ecumenism" in the middle of the twentieth-century. It is considered as "a historical anomaly" because its occurrence was possibly due to "the crises created by the rise of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism and the wars they provoked" (Lindbeck 2004:401). Indeed, the movements toward the visible unity emerged from both the Protestant and the Catholic sides. The movement on the former side was called 'neoorthodoxy,' and the one on the latter side '*la nouvelle théologie*.' Before long, the movements started to decline along "with the defeat of Nazism and Fascism, the containment of Communism in the Cold War, and the rise in the 1960's of new interests such as colonial, black, feminist, and, in the case of Latin America especially, theological-liberation movements" (Lindbeck 2004:401). The flowering was followed by some changes in ecumenical movements, such as an attempt to reinterpret Christian missions as "the service of the world's needs" and the spread of the "wider ecumenism" (Lindbeck 2004:401). Firstly, that reinterpetative attempt was made by both the *Re-thinking Missions* movement in the early twentieth-century and the *Life and Work* movement which finally discolored "the unitive Faith and Order movement as the central ecumenical task." And the change in the color of faith has markedly reoccurred since the Uppsala Assembly of the W.C.C. in 1968 (Lindbeck 2004:401). Secondly, the wider ecumenism refers to "the interest in interreligious relations" which revived after the 1960's and has flourished since the close of the age of the Cold War, at the cost of the interest in intra-Christian relations. It tended to have a far greater appeal to the churches than to "the specifically Christian variety," and those churches were apt to regard Christian ecumenism as "exclusivist and passe" (Lindbeck 2004:401).

Lindbeck (2004:401) also points out that "the increasing disunity within (rather than between) the separated communions" brings forth the weakening of the movement towards visible unity. Indeed, his concern became reality, especially in the Roman Catholic Church and even in professional ecumenist groups, such as the ecumenical institutes worldwide that "gathered under W.C.C. auspices in 2003 at Bossey in Switzerland." Lindbeck (2004:401-402) says,

The unitive impulses that briefly dominated the ecumenical movement in the middle of the twentieth century have largely vanished, leaving the divided churches as fiercely jealous as ever of their autonomy, despite their pulpit-and-altar agreements and professions of mutual friendship. To be sure, some Protestant bodies have fully merged, but they have generally (though not always) been so much alike that their unions have been bureaucratic conveniences rather than reconciliations of estranged communities.

According to Lindbeck (2004:402), “the enthusiasm for visible Christian unity,” which was strikingly prevalent in the W.C.C. and the Decree on Ecumenism at The Second Vatican Council, vanished away,<sup>64</sup> and a discouragement came to prevail among the supporters of unitive ecumenism, including Jean Tillard (1927-2000), a Dominican ecumenist following Congar.

Lindbeck, however, does not agree to any negativistic view of the future, especially, Tillard’s one: he is really optimistic in the future prospect of unitive ecumenism. Lindbeck says,

In contrast to Tillard, I find myself anticipating the reversal of current trends in the perhaps not very distant future (Lindbeck 2004:403).

He continues,

[s]o, I have found myself working in the awareness that seemingly wasted ecumenical activities may once again turn out to be preludes to future advances toward unity in ways that are at present impossible to foresee. Since my retirement, I have been freed to indulge more fully my optimism, if I may call it that, regarding the worthwhileness of the seemingly useless (Lindbeck 2004:405).

---

<sup>64</sup> Lindbeck (2004:402) acknowledges that this disappearance was in part due to the spread of modernity and postmodernity.



Lindbeck accounts for his optimism. It is primarily related to his way of viewing the past. Tillard focuses on the decline in unitive ecumenism since its mid-century heyday rather than on the situation prior to that decline, with the result that the movement toward unity looks as if “it were captive to the downward pull of irreversible forces,” and discouragement might prevail in the minds of people supporting it (Lindbeck 2004:403). In contrast, Lindbeck looks first to the pre-heyday rather than the post-heyday of unitive ecumenism, and then examine “not only the post-heyday drop in concern for church unity but also its much earlier plunge in the 1920’s and 1930’s; this, in turn, highlights the subsequent rise of a unitive concern in defiance of what had been thought of as irresistible contrary forces” (Lindbeck 2004:403). In brief, while Tillard focuses on the period of the postconciliar decline in unitive ecumenism, Lindbeck looks to a bigger ecumenical wave in the twentieth-century Christianity, including that period. Lindbeck (2004:403) says,

Recalling this apparently unstoppable descent in the 1920’ and 1930’s, followed by a totally unanticipated ascent to an as yet unequalled apogee in the mid-century, naturally leads to asking if a similar U-turn might soon be upon us. Given the difficulty of arguing the negative, it is best to concede at least the possibility of such an ecumenical resurgence, not in some unimaginably far-off time, but perhaps even in the present century. There is no certainty about this expectation, yet it influences the way I think about the prospects of the search for Christian unity and helps shape what I am now doing.

According to Lindbeck (2004:403), what made a U-turn in the twentieth-century possible were unimaginable horrors which were caused by World War I and peaked during World War II with the Holocaust in Europe and the atomic tragedy in Japan. For the divided churches in those days, these events seemed like a matter of “quasi-apocalyptic” significance. In other words, they gave such a terrible shock to those churches that they could not help but take interest in “the ecumenical breakthroughs that were the W.C.C. and The Second Vatican Council and that unleashed the vast, decades-long outpourings of time and energy on preparations (largely unused and now mostly forgotten) for further advances toward unity” (Lindbeck 2004:403-404).

Lindbeck (2004:404) says that such a relation between the advent of an age of global troubles and distresses and the upsurge in ecumenical concerns might apply to days to come. In other words, a new movement toward ecclesial unity might arise in the near future because of the prospected worldwide horrors due to “energy crises, atomic-weapon proliferation, and the ecological disasters” (Lindbeck 2004:404). Concerning this supposition, Lindbeck (2004:404) is double-minded: on the one hand, he desires for the actualization of this movement and, on the other hand, fears for it because of the horrible disasters which might come prior to it. Basically, this supposition is not satisfactory to Lindbeck because it is “not only emotionally unappealing” but “also theologically dangerous” (Lindbeck 2004:404). It is especially related to a theologically dangerous interpretation of passivity. Lindbeck (2004:404) says,

[B]ut the future it envisions seems so totally independent of anything that ecumenists can do as to absolve them from their Christian duty to seek the unity of churches here and now. It encourages them, in other words, to wait passively until the next great time of troubles makes a unitive surge both urgent and possible. Such passivity is a species of the heresy of antinomian quietism and is, in our day, a sin that bedevils the apocalyptic dispensational premillennialism of, for example, the *Left Behind* series.

Lindbeck (2004:404) opposes the premillennialist dispensationalism because of its theologically determinist character which is necessarily accompanied by unsound quietism. It is classic providentialism that Lindbeck grounds himself on when arguing against premillennialist dispensationalism. According to Lindbeck (2004:404), classic providentialism says that whatever seems like “utterly wasted efforts,” can be treated as “seeds lying dormant through untold tribulations until the to-us-unknowable “times or seasons” in which they will blossom and bear fruit.” Thus those who really believe in classic providentialism necessarily resist “the false comfort of fatalistic quietism” and “the misuse of both thisworldly and otherworldly apocalypticisms” as well (Lindbeck 2004:404).

It can be thus said that Lindbeck's optimism that there might be "future advances toward unity" in a way that is beyond our imagination is based on these two beliefs: firstly, even though we cannot argue for the exact repetition of history itself, we can see general patterns in history; secondly, apocalyptic dispensational premillennialism which is accompanied by determinism and fatalistic quietism, has to be rejected (Lindbeck 2004:405). Indeed, his optimism has led him to the involvement in "seemingly wasted ecumenical activities" even since his retirement until this day (Lindbeck 2004:405).

In sum, the postconciliar stage of Lindbeck's ecumenical journey in Rome began with the event of 'the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of justification' and has since undergone the decline in unitive ecumenism whose primary goal was to overcome the schism of Christian churches since the sixteenth-century Reformation, especially, the disagreement between the Roman Catholic Church and Lutheran churches over the issue of how to understand the doctrine of justification. Regarding unitive ecumenism in the future, Lindbeck has an optimistic prospect, which is contrary to Tillard's. For while Tillard focuses on the period of the postconciliar decline in unitive ecumenism, Lindbeck looks to a bigger ecumenical wave in the twentieth-century Christianity, including that period. Lindbeck's optimism is based on a belief that there are general patterns in history which are commonly recognizable. It opposes apocalyptic dispensational premillennialism which is accompanied by determinism and fatalistic quietism. Since his retirement, Lindbeck has devoted himself to spreading the optimism "that seemingly wasted ecumenical activities may once again turn out to be preludes to future advances toward unity in ways that are at present impossible to foresee" (Lindbeck 2004:405).

#### **4.1.4 A conclusion from internal evidence**

As examined above, Lindbeck's whole life is an ecumenical one. Ecclesial unity is the central motif in his life. He has always been eager for a true unity of churches and been really involved in various ecumenical dialogues and activities. He has experienced the ups and downs of the twentieth-century ecumenical movements. Importantly, he is still optimistic about the future of unitive ecumenism. He believes

that despite a discouragement among ecumenists throughout the world since the postconciliar decline in the search for ecclesial unity, seemingly useless ecumenical attempts can act as the catalyst to invigorate unitive ecumenism. In conclusion, Lindbeck is a theologian of ecclesial unity or unitive ecumenicity, and in this respect, an ecclesiastical concern can be considered as the hermeneutical core of his theology, which is supported by Eckerstorfer who says that Lindbeck's life is an ecumenical one across several worlds, and that Lindbeck concentrated himself on finding useful perspectives for a renewed ecclesiology rather than seeking a huge enterprise encompassing all the theological themes (Eckerstorfer 2004:400).

## **4.2 External evidence**

External evidence indicates that the hypothesis of this dissertation is supported by the ecclesiological character of the theological movements in which Lindbeck has been involved: postliberalism and the Yale school. In other words, an ecclesiastical concern is not just Lindbeck's personal matter; rather, it is a common feature of those who share the theological ideals with him.

### **4.2.1 An ecclesiastical concern as a common agenda of theologians relating to Lindbeck**

#### **4.2.1.1 An ecclesiastical concern of theologians who had an influence on Lindbeck**

##### **4.2.1.1.1 Hans W. Frei<sup>65</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern**

Frei's work *The Identity of Jesus Christ* (1997), is well-known for its emphasis on "Jesus' identity over his presence" (Michener 2013:57). Contrary to traditional

---

<sup>65</sup> Frei was an American theologian and author (1974), (1975), and (1992). On the relation between Frei and Lindbeck, Hinze (1995:299) states that Lindbeck's basic tenets are compatible with and

theological debates between the supporters of “Christology from above” and “Christology from below,” Frei’s theological position in Christology is that to know Jesus’ identity is to have him present (Michener 2013:57). Frei (1997:69) says,

In our knowledge of Jesus Christ, his presence and his identity are completely one.

Recently, Demson paid attention to Frei’s ecclesiastical concern, especially evident in his work *The identity of Jesus Christ*. Demson (2012:43) says that for Frei the church is of great significance in these two respects: firstly, it “witnesses” to Jesus Christ’s presence; secondly, it is itself “the public and communal form” of the present, indirect presence of Jesus Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit. Noticeably, Frei, in an analogous manner, applies to the church the same “schemata of identity description” as applied to Jesus Christ in the biblical narratives (Demson 2012:43). And in making this attempt, he hints that there is a general, though not complete, similarity between “the relation between Jesus Christ and the church” and “that of the relation between Jesus Christ and Israel” (Demson 2012:43). Demson (2012:43) says,

To describe Israel is to narrate its history. And to identify that people with Jesus, as the New Testament does, means to narrate Jesus’ history as the individual and climactic summing up and identification of the whole people in such a wise that Israel receives its identification from him. Likewise the church moves toward a climactic summing up of its history that must be narrated, but cannot yet be because its history is unfinished.

Frei’s emphasis is thus on the church as “the subject of a history”: in other words, the church is “a subject self” who has an affinity, though not the sameness, with the ultimate subject self, Jesus Christ (Demson 2012:43-44).

Frei also applies to the church “the same intention-action pattern of identity description” as applied to Jesus Christ (Demson 2012:44). This pattern claims that identity is

---

influenced by Frei’s position on biblical hermeneutics, although Frei himself never used the term *postliberal*.

shaped out of two interacting elements, “character and circumstances” (Demson 2012:44). Demson (2012:44) says,

A subject is who he is in the enactment of his most central intentions within the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Frei, however, recognizes the difference between applying this pattern to the church and applying it to Jesus Christ for some reasons. Firstly, the church is essentially “a follower of Jesus, not a reiteration of him” (Demson 2012:44). Frei (1997:191) says,

“To enact the good of men on their behalf” has already been done once for all. The church has no need to play the role of “Christ figure.” Rather, it is called upon to be a collective disciple, to follow at a distance the pattern of exchange, serving rather than being served, and accepting (as the disciple, as differentiated from his Lord) the enrichment given to him by his neighbor.

Secondly, “the church’s intention-action pattern, unlike Jesus’,” is not completed: in other words, it is inevitably related to “Jesus’ presence in a future mode” (Demson 2012:44). Frei (1997:191) says,

Just as Jesus was at once an individual person and event and yet also the climactic summary and incorporation of that history which is the people Israel, so the future mode of that presence will be a significant, incorporative summing up of history in a manner that we should be fools to try to imagine or forecast in a literal fashion.

In brief, Frei’s primary concern is with the identity of Jesus Christ. He, however, is not confined to it: in other words, he extends beyond it to the concern with the identity of the church. In the course of this extension, Frei argues that a similarity is found between the pattern of the identity description of Jesus Christ and that of the church, despite their differences.

#### 4.2.1.1.2 Paul L. Holmer and his ecclesiastical concern

Holmer is well-known for his special 40-year career as a teacher of philosophy and theology at the University of Minnesota (for 14 years) and at Yale University (for 26 years). While teaching at the University of Minnesota, he also had the experience of teaching at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, where Lindbeck was studying at that time (Horst 1988:891-895). Holmer was a specialist in the philosophies of Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard<sup>66</sup>. His knowledge of Wittgenstein, in particular, had a great influence on Lindbeck's theology. Lindbeck (1984:28) says,

I am particularly indebted to my colleague Paul Holmer for his understanding of what is theologically important about Wittgenstein.

Importantly, Holmer had a deep concern for the church. According to Horst (1988:891-895), Holmer's ecclesiastical concern was motivated by the intellectual environment of the Yale Divinity School when he arrived there in 1960. It was characterized by the emphasis upon "the history of the church and its theological traditions," which was especially affected by "Kenneth Scott Latourette, H. Richard Niebuhr and Robert Lowry Calhoun." Holmer, above all, cautioned his students against the dangers of making theology a scholastic work and of separating the religious beliefs from religious life. He maintained his good relationship with local churches by giving them "unfailing support" and helping them to recognize the importance of "the role and significance of the parish ministry." Holmer's work *Communicating the Faith indirectly: Selected Sermons, Addresses, and Prayers* (2013a), demonstrates this. His consistent contact with the local churches, in turn, provided him with "a critical perspective on the church" (Marino 2004:3). Early on he says that theology and the church were not always supporting each other (Marino 2004:3). Marino (2004:3) says,

Holmer often complained that a false distinction had been drawn between the Christian teachings and the Christian life. As he saw it, theologians had drawn too sharp a distinction between theology and devotion, theology and

---

<sup>66</sup> For Holmer as a specialist in the philosophy of Wittgenstein, see Holmer (2013c). For Holmer as a specialist in the philosophy of Kierkegaard, see Holmer (2013b) and Holmer (2013c).

preaching, theology and the Christian life. Holmer insisted that prayer, the Christian life, and Christian church practices were not optional to theology. They're necessitated by what it means to believe in God. These things are the meaning of the Gospel. The meaning of the Gospel cannot be stated in theological terms. It has to be stated in terms of these practices and modes of activity. ... The teachings and the life go together.

Marino (2004:4) continues,

As far as he was concerned, the church's claim on people seemed, in all too many instances, to be independent of theology. Holmer made it part of his task as a teacher to close the gap between theology and the church and to get more God-centered religion in the churches. He said, "that's what I need myself and that's what I seek when I go there."

Holmer, who exerted an important effect on Lindbeck, had a deep concern for the relation between theology and the church.

#### **4.2.1.1.3 David H. Kelsey and his ecclesiastical concern**

Having obtained his undergraduate and graduate degrees at Yale, Kelsey (born 1932), "as a colleague of both Lindbeck and Frei," taught at Yale Divinity School for the period of 40 years (1965-2005) and is now "the Luther A. Weigle Professor of Theology Emeritus" there (Michener 2013:78). He is well known for his own interest in theological anthropology, especially presented in his work *Eccentric Existence* (2009). He is also renowned as a theological educator, especially "as one who studiously monitors the pulse of theological education in North America"<sup>67</sup> (Schier n.d.). However, what made him famous in the field of dogmatics,<sup>68</sup> is his insight into the use of Scripture in a Christian community (Martin 2008:116).

---

<sup>67</sup> Kelsey's deep concern for theological education is especially presented in Kelsey (1992) and Kelsey (1993).

<sup>68</sup> Martin (2008:116) recommends Kelsey (1985) and Kelsey (1999) for the understanding of Kelsey's ideas in the field of dogmatics. Kelsey (1999) is summarized by Vanhoozer: firstly, "the way Scripture functions authoritatively in theology" is inseparable from how to view God. It is



Although Kelsey was not so much known as one of “the ‘big three’ of the Yale School”<sup>69</sup> as Frei or Lindbeck, his influence on those two theologians was important (Michener 2013:78). Firstly, Kelsey (1985) challenged Frei to move closer to Lindbeck “in emphasizing theological interpretation of the Bible as an inevitably communal and tradition-shaped practice (as opposed to the mere decipherment of meanings objectively given as a function of literary structure)” (DeHart 2006:27-28). Secondly, Kelsey (1985) helped Lindbeck to pay more attention to the matter of textuality, and thus to move “closer to Frei and, in particular, to Frei’s interpretation of Karl Barth” (DeHart 2006:28)

As a theologian Kelsey was deeply involved in finding the source of the authority of biblical texts as Christian scripture, that is, in finding “what makes a certain text or texts deemed as ‘Christian scripture’ to the church” (Michener 2013:78) According to Michener (2013:78-79), Kelsey’s idea about this topic has an ecclesiological implication, which comprises these three aspects. Firstly, a text is taken as Christian scripture in connection with its ecclesial context. If a text functions “in the church by what it expresses, renders, occasions or proposes” it can be recognized as Christian scripture (Michener 2013:79). Secondly, a text is called Christian scripture in relation to its transforming function. If a text plays a key role in transforming a person’s life and shaping one’s character and finally brings one to salvation, “providing a change of belief and redemption of the person,” it can be considered as having a quality which is characteristic of Christian scripture (Michener 2013:79). Thirdly, a text is described as Christian scripture when it leads to shaping the identity of members of the church.

---

called “first theology”; secondly, a theologian’s first theology depends invariably on a so-called “imaginative construal,” that is, “a decision to take the Bible as based on our discernment of how God relates to the community of readers via Scripture; thirdly, every theologian has a tendency to “construe the Bible singularly, as one type of thing only,” which contradicts the diversity in the Bible, especially “the New Testament’s diverse historical, narrative, ethical, and other statements” (Vanhoozer 2008:192).

<sup>69</sup> Martin (2008:116) considers the teachings and writings of three theologians named Hans W. Frei, George A. Lindbeck, and David H. Kelsey as a firm foundation of “the Yale theology.” Among those teachings and writings, he especially focuses on Frei’s emphasis on “the importance of narrative for understanding the meaning of Scripture”, Lindbeck’s description of “Christian doctrine as the grammar of a social-linguistic system whose meaningfulness derives from internal structures and intratextuality”, and Kelsey’s “studies of how different theologians and communities read and use Scripture, arguing that we must pay attention not only to what people say about Scripture, but also how Scripture actually functions for scholars and faith communities” (Martin 2008:116).

In brief, what Kelsey emphasizes as to the designation of a text as Christian scripture is that scriptural authority is not related with “the description of the properties of the texts” but with “how the texts are used in various ways ‘for the common life of the Christian community’” (Michener 2013:79).

According to Vanhoozer (2005:153), Kelsey’s account of why a text is taken as Christian scripture may raise a doubt as to whether he is inclined to the theological position of the Catholics rather than to that of the Protestants by focusing on tradition despite his claim “to remain theologically neutral.” In relation to this doubt, Vanhoozer (2005:153) interprets Kelsey’s view of tradition as this: tradition is what the church *is* – a “process” reality; Scripture, by contrast, is what the church *uses to preserve what she is*. Vanhoozer (2005:153) says,

On Kelsey’ account, therefore, *tradition* is the all-encompassing term for referring to the way in which the Spirit of God is present in the community’s use of Scripture to nurture Christian identity. Decisions about the mode of God’s presence in the community’s use of Scripture are the results of what Kelsey calls an “imaginative construal” as to what Christianity is all about.

In Vanhoozer’s view, Kelsey gives a distinctive account of how to reach such decisions, according to which they do not depend on biblical exegesis but on the life of a Christian community (Vanhoozer 2005:153). Here we can see a Wittgensteinian tendency toward “the priority of use” in Kelsey: “in order to understand the language games theologians play, one must join in, or at least observe, Christian forms of life” (Vanhoozer 2005:153). In brief, a Catholic-like impression in Kelsey can be accounted for by his being affected by Wittgenstein.

In sum, Kelsey, a colleague of Lindbeck at Yale Divinity School, focuses on the church’s role, especially the church’s role of using the Bible, in describing it as Christian scripture.

## 4.2.1.2 An ecclesiastical concern of Yale-trained postliberal theologians<sup>70</sup>

### 4.2.1.2.1 James J. Buckley<sup>71</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern

Buckley's insight on which topic should be treated as urgent and important in ecumenical discussions today is stated in Root and Buckley (2012:ix). According to him, it is how ethical issues affect the unity of church.

While doctrinal issues have often in the past been the most ecumenically neuralgic topics, increasingly today ethical issues - abortion and homosexuality most prominently - have become a focus of difference between the churches and of potentially splintering debate within churches (Root & Buckley 2012:ix).

Recalling that the unity of churches was historically split because of moral or ethical disagreements, whether they are general ones or specific ones<sup>72</sup>, Buckley urges the Christians today to ponder over the question: "When can we live together with difference over such matters, and when does unity in Christ require common teaching?" (Root & Buckley 2012:ix).

Buckley also wrote the introduction to Lindbeck (2002). There he defines the church in a postliberal age as "the Church in all its reconciled diversity" and characterizes it

---

<sup>70</sup> The present chapter follows Dorrien's classification of postliberal theologians who followed Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, into three small groups: Yale-trained theologians, a generally younger group of Yale-trained postliberals, and theologians from different academic backgrounds (Dorrien 2001:16-21). Springs (2010:189) regards this classification by Dorrien as an example of the so-called "family resemblance" analysis." For a chronological classification of postliberalism, or postliberal theologians, see DeHart (2006:1-53).

<sup>71</sup> Buckley, Professor of Theology at Loyola University Maryland, is currently a member of the American Lutheran-Catholic dialogue and an associate editor of *Modern Theology* and associate director of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology. He obtained his M.A. and M.Phil. from Yale University Graduate School in 1975 and won his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1977 (Loyola University 2012). He edited (together with Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt and Trent Pomplun) *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism* (2011) and contributed to it (chapter 25, *The End*). He also edited (together with Michael Root) *Who Do You Say That I Am?: Proclaiming and Following Jesus Today* (2014).

<sup>72</sup> Root & Buckley (2012:ix) gives these two examples of specific moral or ethical disagreements: the disputes "over rich and poor at Corinthian Eucharists" and the disputes over slavery within the nineteenth-century American churches.

as “a radical tradition” on the one hand and as “a comprehensive tradition” on the other hand. Buckley (2002:x) says,

The Church in all its reconciled diversity is a radical tradition at once evangelical and catholic. It is a reform movement within a comprehensive tradition as it seeks to reconcile the conflicts of that tradition.

Buckley (2002:xiii) argues that the church in a postliberal age must seek for the recovery of its relationship with the Jewish people and that like Israel under the messianic tradition, the church in a postliberal age must aim at serving “other religions for the sake of the neighbor, for the sake of humanity, for the sake of God’s promise to Abraham that through his seed all nations will be blessed.”

It can be said that Buckley had a deep concern for ecumenical ecclesiology, especially, about the moral or ethical disagreements within or among the churches on the one hand and in relation to the messianic tradition on the other hand.

#### **4.2.1.2.2 Joseph A. DiNoia, O.P.<sup>73</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern**

According to Durbin II (2008:114), DiNoia believes in both the universal character of God’s salvation and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the mediator. He uses “the concept of the providential diversity of religions” to show the compatibility of Christianity with the notion of the universality of salvation (Durbin II 2008:115). Durbin (2008:115-116) says,

The concept of the providential diversity of religions is the cornerstone of DiNoia’s account. ... He seeks to balance the distinctive aims of life of other faith traditions with the unique value of the Christian community as vehicle of universal salvation by ascribing an “indirect or providential value to other religious communities” (ibid.). ... We can value other religions not because

---

<sup>73</sup> DiNoia (born 1943) is an American member of the Dominican Order and a Roman Catholic archbishop and theologian. He has, since September 2013, been appointed by Pope Francis as Assistant (Adjunct) Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He obtained his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1980 (The Official Catholic Directory 2015). He wrote DiNoia (1992), DiNoia (2004) etc.

they are “channels of grace or means of salvation,” but rather because we can affirm that they play a role in God’s divine plan, even though we cannot comprehend what that role might be (DiNoia 1992, 91; 1982, 387).

DiNoia’s postliberal disposition can be seen in his emphasis that Christians must recognize the deep differences among religious traditions in order to keep their Christian faith yet simultaneously respect other religious traditions.<sup>74</sup>

DiNoia’s idea of the church is inseparable from his postliberal position in theology. According to Levering (2010:178), he claims that the ultimate end of the church is to fulfill God’s will to share his divine life with human beings, especially through the historical events of Jesus. It implies his affirmation of the universality of salvation. DiNoia (2004:69) says,

There is a church because the triune God willed to share his divine life with human persons and to establish this communion through the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of the only begotten Son.

He also argues that ecclesial hierarchy originated from the adoption of an institutional form into the life of the community of faith (2010:178). He thinks that the Catholic Church deviated from the proper nature of the church found in the New Testament “by giving institutional form to a ‘sacramental and juridical organization sustained by priests channeling divine life through a set of rituals’” (DiNoia 2004:59).

It can thus be said that DiNoia’s postliberal theology has an ecclesiastical implication.

---

<sup>74</sup> On DiNoia’s postliberal disposition, McGrath (2011:440) comments that he requests that we take religious diversity seriously and avoid the reductionist way of thinking.

#### 4.2.1.2.3 Garrett Green<sup>75</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern

Green is well known as a postliberal<sup>76</sup> theologian who stressed the importance of religious imagination in theology. While exploring religious imagination, he carries on a dialogue with neo-orthodox theologians Emil Brunner and Karl Barth. For him, like science, theology is a discipline grounded on a paradigm as “an important aspect of imagination,” and the religious imagination is the point of contact between divinity and humanity (Green 1989:49). Green (1989:34) says,

One way to state the thesis of this book is to say that the dilemma can be resolved by identifying the point of divine-human contact as imagination.

There is a similarity between the religious and the scientific use of paradigms, which is the imagination working with “gestalts that pattern particulars of a field into a whole framework which then shapes subsequent thought.” Green (1989:61) says,

Philosophers of science and gestalt psychologists also speak sometimes of imagination in connection with paradigmatic phenomena in their fields of inquiry, though usually without developing it explicitly as a technical term.

The scientific and the religious paradigms differ only in terms of the content of imagination. Christian theology, in particular, has the revelation of Jesus Christ as its content of imagination; this content of Jesus Christ is freely given by God’s grace to let the religious imagination work in a right direction. Green (1989:104) says,

---

<sup>75</sup> Green served as Professor of Religious Studies and Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Connecticut College, New London, Connecticut during the 1970-2006 academic years and is currently Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies there. He obtained his M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Yale (Connecticut College 2015). He wrote Green (1989) and others.

<sup>76</sup> Fulkerson relates the term *postliberal* to the concept *intratextual*. Considering *intratextuality* as the key idea of postliberal theology which is dissatisfied “with the fragmenting effects of historical criticism,” and defining it as the typical prioritization of “a core biblical narrative as the “plain sense” of the text,” Fulkerson (1996:47) says,

Shaped by this narrative a Christian form of life should then “absorb” the secular world.

Conversely, the proper order is transgressed and the Christian form of life is accommodated when religion is redescribed or translated into “extrascriptural frameworks,” or “popular categories,” as opposed to its “intrinsic sense” (Lindbeck 1984,124).

The point of contact for divine revelation is, materially, the paradigmatic image of God embodied in Jesus Christ; formally, it is the human imagination[.]

What Green seeks for through religious imagination is the recovery of theology's hermeneutical mission, to interpret the paradigm of the Scripture for the community of faith.

Green's concept of religious imagination has an ecclesiastical implication. It seeks to overcome the limits of the individualistic imagination and to rediscover and focus on the communal aspect of imagination. Green (1989:x) says,

The Christian imagination is thus the imagination of the Christian church, in all its bewildering multiplicity and diversity. Though I believe this point is implicit in *Imagining God*, more could be done to guard it against individualist misreadings.

It can, therefore, be said that Green's postliberal thought has an ecclesiastical concern.

#### **4.2.1.2.4 Stanley Hauerwas<sup>77</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern**

As an American postliberal<sup>78</sup> theologian and ethicist, Hauerwas (1985:2) objects to the liberal assumption that theology ultimately seeks for some universal experience. According to Hauerwas (1985:2), each religion has its own distinctive experience

---

<sup>77</sup> Hauerwas (born 1940), taught at University of Aberdeen, University of Notre Dame and is currently serving as the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School. He was chosen as "America's Best Theologian" by *Time Magazine* in 2001. He earned a B.D at Yale Divinity School in 1965 and a Ph.D. at Yale University Graduate School in 1968 (Let's Talk 2001). Hauerwas (1981) won the honor to be named as one of the one hundred most important books on religion in the twentieth century by *Christianity Today*.

<sup>78</sup> For Hauerwas (1985:2), the term *postliberal* refers to the theological position which corresponds to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach to religion and doctrine as an alternative to the liberals' assertion that "there is an experiential core to religion."

which cannot be reduced, and is available within a particular community peculiar to it. The Christian experience is available within the community of Christian faith.<sup>79</sup>

Hauerwas stresses the importance of stories in Christian ethics. According to Placher (1997:349), Hauerwas believes that stories offer moral guidance more effectively than moral principles and that they form a particular community. Thus, for Hauerwas, the ultimate goal of Christian ethics is to demand that Christians should “preserve a community that tells the stories that make Christian virtues possible” rather than to offer “some universal standard of rational ethics” (Placher 1997:349).

Hauerwas finally reached the ethics of virtue, which claims that Christian ethics, or Christian morals, should be based on the virtues discovered in the biblical narratives and that among them, the virtue of peaceableness in particular is pre-eminent. Hauerwas (1994:144) actually urged American Christians to reflect on “the morality of war,” especially on the morality of the Gulf War in 1990-1991. In this respect, he can be assessed to be influenced by the Mennonite ethicist John Howard Yoder (1927-1997).<sup>80</sup>

In Hauerwas’s Christian ethics the church is of great significance. For the church is essentially a community which is grounded on the biblical stories and is shaped by its own language unshared with the world (Hauerwas 1985:11; Hauerwas 1981:10). According to Hauerwas, the ultimate goal of the church is to make the church the church.

The final social ethical task of the church is to be the church – the servant community. Such a claim may well sound self-serving until we remember that what makes the church the church is its faithful manifestation of the peaceable kingdom in the world (Hauerwas 1983:99-100).

---

<sup>79</sup> The liberals’ criticisms against Hauerwas’s theology can be summarized as: firstly, it is conservative; secondly, it is sectarian; thirdly, it is irrational. Hauerwas refuted all of them. For more information, see Hauerwas (1985:3-8).

<sup>80</sup> For their agreement, especially regarding the topic of the first social ethical task of the church, see Fujiwara (2012:89).



For the church to adopt social strategies in the name of securing justice in such a social order is only to compound the problem. Rather the church must recognize that her first social task in any society is to be herself (Hauerwas 1981:83-84).

In brief, the church exists “as a political alternative to every nation, witnessing to the kind of social life possible for those that have been formed by the story of Christ” (Hauerwas 1981:12).

It can, therefore, be concluded that Hauerwas’s postliberal Christian ethics has an ecclesiastical character.

#### **4.2.1.2.5 George Hunsinger<sup>81</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern**

As a postliberal, Hunsinger wrote an essay about postliberalism, entitled *postliberal theology* (2003). There he argues that although postliberal theology and the Yale School cannot be separated from each other, they need to be distinguished from each other. Hunsinger (2003:57) says,

Although Frei, Lindbeck, and the “Yale School” gave strong impetus to postliberal theology, postliberal theology involves far more than the Yale School. It includes not only perhaps the two greatest theologians of the twentieth century (Barth and von Balthasar) and at least one great missiologist (Newbigin), but also a number of promising younger theologians whose work is just starting to bear fruit.

Hunsinger (2003:44) also distinguishes between the terms *postliberal* and *neoliberal*, which is based on his characterization of postliberalism as the “form of tradition-based rationality in theology for which questions of truth and method are strongly dependent

---

<sup>81</sup> Hunsinger, an ordained Presbyterian minister, was director of the Seminary’s Center for Barth Studies and is currently Princeton Theological Seminary’s Hazel Thompson McCord Professor of Systematic Theology. He is well-known as the founder of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. He obtained his M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. from Yale University. He wrote Hunsinger (2004), Hunsinger (2000) etc.

on questions of meaning, and for which questions of meaning are determined by the intratextual subject matter of Scripture.” Hunsinger (2003:44) says,

Postliberalism bids for a paradigm shift in which liberalism and evangelicalism are overlapped, dismantled, and reconstituted on a new and different plane. Neoliberalism, by contrast, would be more nearly a revisionist extension within the established liberal paradigm. It does not so much depart from as perpetuate the liberal/evangelical split characteristic of modernity itself.

From such a point of view, Frei may be assessed to be “more directly” inclined toward postliberalism; Lindbeck, to be “slightly more” inclined toward neoliberalism (Hunsinger 2003:44). Especially concerning Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic theory, Hunsinger (2003:44) holds that it is “three theories in one”: a (cultural) theory of religion, a (regulative) theory of doctrine, and a (pragmatist) theory of truth, and that the theory of religion may be assessed to be postliberal; the other theories to be neoliberal. Like the liberals, the neoliberals argue that doctrine and truth are both essentially non-cognitive (Hunsinger 2003:44). The neoliberals, however, are different from the liberals in such a manner that they relativize “doctrine’s propositional content” “by redefinition (the “rule theory”),” while the liberals do so “by reinterpretation,” and that they promote “religion’s practical content” “by means of a new theory of truth that is more pragmatic,” while the liberals do so “by way of a theory of religious truth that is “experiential-expressive”” (Hunsinger 2003:44-45).

Concerning the features of postliberal theology in its authentic sense, Hunsinger (2003:57) makes the following summarization. Firstly, it has its own distinctive “set of goals, interests and commitments,” among which its “ecumenical interests” and its “desire to move beyond modernity’s liberal/evangelical impasse” are of great significance. Secondly, it deals with “old questions like the truth of theological language, interdisciplinary relations, and religious pluralism,” but from a nonfoundationalist perspective.

Hunsinger’s ecclesiastical concern is presented in his work *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast* (2008). This work is primarily for the reformed churches and their members, especially for helping them “move towards visible unity”

(Hunsinger 2008:274). Hunsinger (2008:274) defines the most pressing goal of the ecumenical movement “to achieve substantive convergence so that wider Eucharistic sharing can begin,” rather than to seek for “self-preservation” or “ecclesiastical self-aggrandizement.”

In Hunsinger’s sight, ecumenical theology is quite different from enclave theology and academic theology. Enclave theology is defined as “a theology based narrowly in a single tradition” that focuses on “rectitude and hegemony” rather than on “dialogue” (Hunsinger 2008:274). It tends to degenerate into a kind of dogmatism, that is, an attitude to “learn one’s theology against someone else” (Cummings 2015:97). Academic theology, at least in the liberal mood prevalent in “western institutes of higher education,” is likely to insist on “its own open-ended, critical-liberal project without any need to recognize or to respond to ecclesial allegiance” (Cummings 2015:97). Cummings (2015:97) says,

[O]ne could say that academic theology has often saved the churches from fundamentalism and authoritarianism in theology. While he appreciates this contribution, perhaps Hunsinger would say that this kind of academic theology wants to reflect on the Christian tradition but without “belonging.” Belonging is all-important for him in view of the overriding goal of Christian re-union.

With his distinction of ecumenical theology from those two theologies mentioned above, Hunsinger seeks for the way of bringing “the Reformed tradition” “closer to Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox features without compromising Reformed essentials” (Cummings 2015:97). To this goal, he strategically shows the Reformed a way of adopting “some previously contested views – on the historic threefold offices (bishop, presbyter, deacon), on Eucharistic sacrifice, and on the consecrated gifts – without theological compromise” (Cummings 2015:96).

In his conclusion, Cummings (2015:110) defines the features of Hunsinger’s ecumenical theology as “realism and a life-giving hope.”

In brief, postliberal Hunsinger has an ecclesiastical concern, especially related to ecumenical theology.

#### 4.2.1.2.6 Bruce D. Marshall<sup>82</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern

A recent phenomenon in the churches in North America is the conversion of Lutherans, even if not too many, to Catholicism or Orthodoxy. Mattox and Roeber (2012:8) says,

It hasn't exactly been a flood, but recent years have seen many North American Lutherans, lay and ordained, leave their churches in order to be received either into the arms of "mother Rome" or into "the fullness of Orthodoxy."

According to Mattox and Roeber (2012:8), Orthodox and Catholic believers' move into Lutheran churches is scarce, while the move in the opposite direction<sup>83</sup> is relatively frequent and even noteworthy because of some prominent figures' involvement, including the late Jaroslav Pelikan's conversion to Orthodoxy in U.S.A in 1998<sup>84</sup>.

Among those who were once the representatives of Lutheran churches in America and have recently crossed into the Roman Catholic Church, there was Bruce D. Marshall (Mattox & Roeber 2012:9).<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Marshall was a former Lutheran, taught at St. Olaf College as Professor of Religion, and is currently Lehman Professor of Christian Doctrine at Perkins School of Theology in the Southern Methodist University. His main interest is in the topics of "the Trinity," "Aquinas and Luther," "Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue," and "the church's relationship with Israel" (Byassee 2006). He earned his M.A.R. from Yale Divinity School and his Ph.D. from Yale University (SMU. Perkins School of Theology n.d.). Marshall (2004) is one of his major works.

<sup>83</sup> The recent conversion of Lutherans to Catholicism, in particular, can be accounted for with respect to an ecumenical mood in the relation between Lutherans and Catholics. According to Mattox and Roeber (2012:9-10), such an ecumenical mood has flourished since "the Second Vatican Council" in 1962-1965, through two events, "the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) at Augsburg, Germany" in 1999, and the World Methodist Council's ratification of "a Statement of Association" in 2006, which means its "joining the Lutherans and Roman Catholics in the JDDJ."

<sup>84</sup> Pelikan tried to diminish the significance of his conversion, attributing "it to his Slavic heritage", but couldn't get a full understanding from those around him. For he taught at Yale University as Sterling Professor and was generally accepted as "one of the world's foremost Lutheran theologians and church historians", and was well-known "as coeditor of the American Edition of the works of Martin Luther" (Mattox & Roeber 2012:8).

<sup>85</sup> Among them, there were also the late Richard John Neuhaus, Robert Wilken, Ola Tjørhom, Reinhard Hütter, and Michael Root (Mattox & Roeber 2012:9).

According to Byassee (2006), his conversion to Catholicism was not made by any “push” factor” but by his own theological conviction. As a Lutheran, he rather kept the catholicity of the church in his heart. Furthermore, since studying at Yale with George Lindbeck, he has held a firm belief in so-called “evangelical and catholic Lutheranism,” according to which the Reformation in the sixteenth century is taken “as an attempt to restore genuine catholicity to the church” (Byassee 2006).

Concerning Marshall’s conversion, we need to notice his postliberal disposition. In other words, he believes that there is no doctrinal obstacle to prevent a Lutheran, who truly accepts the Augsburg Confession, from being a Catholic (Byassee 2006). Marshall didn’t feel any burden of changing his doctrinal position from Lutheranism into Catholicism (Byassee 2006).<sup>86</sup> It reminds of a goal of Lindbeck’s postliberal theology, that is, “doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation” (Lindbeck 1984:16-17).

Marshall’s postliberal disposition is obvious from his account of the relation between theology and philosophy. According to Hunsinger (2015:123), Marshall maintains that those disciplines are related to so-called postliberal grammar which, to an appropriate degree, puts a comparatively greater emphasis “on theology’s priority” and “on its assimilative power” as well. In other words, Marshall objects to modern “methodological practices” since the Enlightenment because they, he thinks, “have correlated, subordinated, assimilated or curtailed Christian theological content to some grand secular philosophy” (Hunsinger 2015:123). He, instead, shows his own way of doing theology, that is, “a trinitarian way of reshaping the concept of truth” (Hunsinger 2015:123). Concerning Marshall’s trinitarian way, Hunsinger says,

He not only tackles some of the toughest minds in contemporary philosophy (Frege, Tarski, Davidson), but shows an unerring postliberal touch. Arguing on trinitarian grounds that the Christian way of identifying God ought to have unrestricted primacy when it comes to the justification of belief, he proposes a trinitarian way of reshaping the concept of truth. Whatever the disputes about the details, Marshall admirably demonstrates what Frei meant by

---

<sup>86</sup> As for “the Catholic “extras”” such as the Catholic teaching on Mary, Marshall doesn’t treat it as an obstacle to conversion but as “a bonus” (Byassee 2006).

making *ad hoc*, descriptive use of a secular discipline without losing proper theological control.

Marshall's postliberal disposition is accompanied by an emphasis on theologians' ecclesiastical responsibility. Marshall (2013:42) challenges an assumption prevalent in academic circles today: because theology is basically a scientific and intellectual discipline, theologians should be free to seek and accept "evidence and arguments wherever they may lead, unencumbered by outside interference, especially the interference of those who – like most bishops – are not themselves intellectuals." He rather insists that a theologian should keep an ecclesiastical vocation in his/her mind. Marshall (2013:42) says,

Precisely as an intellectual, the theologian's calling and task are *from* the Church, and so his responsibility is *to* the Church. ... Theology exists to serve the Church[.] ... The intellectual and the ecclesial belong together. There is no need for the Christian theologian "or the Christian scholar of any sort" to choose one over the other. Playing the intellectual and ecclesial aspects of the theologian's vocation against one another (from either side) isn't to do Catholic theology better but to cease doing it at all. ... Theology is a scientific discipline, which like all scientific disciplines must answer to a community. The community to which theologians finally answer is the Church.

According to Marshall (2013:42-43), no wonder the Church has one important limitation: all the members of the Church are not intellectuals. Nevertheless, theologians should accept "the judgment of the Church" about "what is and is not in accord with its faith" because of "the very nature of the Christian faith as a communally mediated system of belief and practice" and because of the ecclesiastical nature of theologians' vocation as well.

It can, therefore, be said that Marshall's postliberal disposition is closely related to an ecclesiastical concern.

#### 4.2.1.2.7 William C. Placher<sup>87</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern

Placher (2007) proposes a new theological approach to the doctrine of the Trinity of God, that is, the postliberal approach. According to the postliberal approach, any attempt to prove the existence of God is rejected because, even if it would be a success, it cannot guarantee the knowledge of three persons in one God. Placher (2007:1) says,

If we could prove the existence of God, moreover, then we would have this one God firmly established, and the claim that God is triune would be at most an afterthought, an added complexity to a basic belief in one God. If, however, as I believe, we can know God only as revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit, then we start with three.

Even Placher (2007:25) considers the attempt to prove God as idolatry because he believes that “proof involves defining one’s terms, and an entity so defined is inevitably an idol rather than God”. Placher (2007:25-26) argues,

Neither human reason nor human religious experience can lead us to God. At most they leave us usefully puzzled, aware of the inadequacies of our human modes of understanding and not quite sure where to turn next.<sup>88</sup>

Placher (2007:20) discovers that there is a fundamental difference between the premodern age and the modern age in terms of how to approach God’s existence: “premodern thinkers” did not try “to prove God’s existence, define God’s essence, or describe their own experiences of God” but “to show that such enterprises are impossible and that God lies beyond all our proofs and definitions and imaginations,” while modern theologians focused on the argument for their “own correctness”, which

---

<sup>87</sup> As a leading figure of postliberal theology Placher (1948-2008) was the Charles D. and Elizabeth S. LaFollette Distinguished Professor in the Humanities at Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana, and also served as an editor-at-large of *Christian Century*. He obtained his master’s degree in philosophy from Yale University in 1974 and earned his Ph.D. also from Yale in 1975 (Wabash College 2008). He wrote Placher (1989), Placher (1994) etc.

<sup>88</sup> This reminds of Lindbeck’s rejection of two traditional approaches to religion, that is, the propositional-cognitive approach and the experiential-expressivist approach.

meant reducing “matters of faith” to the sources for theological debates. Placher (2007:21) admits that modernity, especially European modernity went wrong in speculating about God<sup>89</sup>; nevertheless, the solution does not consist in returning to the premodern age, especially the medieval times, because we are now living “in a time when many people, at least in Europe and North America, are all too willing to be silent about God.”

Placher (2007:22) thinks that the main interest of theology in the postmodern age might be in the question of “whether there are permanently unanswerable questions that point beyond the realm of our experience and to which Christian revelation could provide a totally unexpected answer.”

In the long run, Placher (2007:41) reaches the conclusion that a great emphasis has to be laid upon the Bible as God’s self-revelation, saying that “Biblical texts claim to tell us more. It is God’s self-revelation, and that alone, that can get us beyond fumbling, unanswered questions, beyond, “Not this, not this.”.

Particularly, Placher focuses on the Gospels in the Bible. He defines them as “*history-like witnesses*” (Placher 2007:59). The Gospels as witnesses are by nature different from any “scientific truths or poetic insights or myths”; rather, like history, they witness “to events in time and place near to that of their authors and first readers” (Placher 2007:59). Placher (2007:59) says,

[The Gospels] are thus like history. ... [T]hey resemble other ancient biographies (often in the Greek world of philosophers), which sought to capture the core of their subject’s identity and teaching rather than the details of a life. Nevertheless, they are *witnesses*. Once we understand the points of the stories, we can be confident of the authors’ commitment to their truth. They are asserting that this is the person Jesus was: the *sort* of person he was as anecdotally illustrated by characteristic sayings and actions, and the particular

---

<sup>89</sup> Placher (2007:21-22) says, “[i]f we try to talk about God in a way that fits God into human categories and systems, we end up not with God but with an idol (and our arguments for the existence of the idol do not work very well anyway). Idols are things we can control.”



person he was as manifested in the events of his life that most defined his identity.

What the Gospels witness to is “*truths both historical and transcendent*” (Placher 2007:59). In some cases, they deal with the ordinary life of Jesus on earth, but in other ones, they focus on divine matters concerning him (Placher 2007:59). Placher’s understanding of the Gospels as history-like witnesses reminds us of Frei’s view of “the Bible as realistic prose” (Taylor 2013:113).<sup>90</sup>

For Placher this postliberal approach to the doctrine of the Trinity, whose point of departure is the Bible as God’s self-revelation and which focuses on the Gospels as history-like witnesses, leads finally to these two conclusions. Firstly, our Trinitarian terminology has to be used to preserve God’s mysteries described in biblical narratives rather than to explain it. Placher (2007:120) says,

The great theologians often admit, when talking about the Trinity, that they do not know what the terms they use mean, or they refer to mysteries beyond their power to explain. I had previously taken such remarks simply as signs of pious humility; now I began to think that they meant what they said. The key terms were not intended as definitions, but rather served as placeholders in arguments designed to preserve mystery rather than explain it.

Secondly, the point of departure of our discussion of the Trinity should be three, not one. Placher (2007:1) says,

If, however, as I believe, we can know God only as revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit, then we start with three.

He continues,

---

<sup>90</sup> Taylor (2013:113-114) says that for Frei realism represents “the world of the Biblical text, the church’s approach to the Bible before modern Biblical criticism, and the hermeneutic of Karl Barth.”

Christians *start* knowing God in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, in Jesus' references to the one he called "Father," and in the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete Jesus promised, who forms and sustains our faith. The task of any doctrine of the Trinity is thus not to show how an abstract one is three, but to show that these three are one, and this is not an unnecessary complication but something essential to what Christians believe (Placher 2007:120).

Importantly, Placher's postliberal approach to the doctrine of the Trinity requires the existence of the church because without her the Triune God who is witnessed to by the Bible cannot be confessed. Placher and Willis-Watkins (1992:46) says,

It is the church that confesses that the God who is witnessed to in the accounts of the New Testament is the same God who is witnessed to by the people of the Old Testament. It is the church that confesses the triune God.

In brief, Placher's approach to the doctrine of the Trinity is a postliberal one following Frei's realistic view of the Bible, and the belief in the Triune God, what Placher advocates, has to be confessed by the church. In this respect, Placher (2007), his scholarly and ecclesiastical work, is based on a postliberal theology.

#### **4.2.1.2.8 George W. Stroup<sup>91</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern**

As a postliberal, Stroup objects to the foundationalist disposition of theological liberals and defines the seeking of Christian identity as the central task in contemporary Christianity. Stroup (1997:24) says,

The most urgent theological issue is not whether there is some common ground between Christian faith and other religious traditions, ... nor the question of whether Christianity is superior to other religious traditions. The crucial theological issue of our day is not whether the Christian community

---

<sup>91</sup> Stroup (born 1944), a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), taught at Princeton Theological Seminary and Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and is currently J.B. Green Professor Emeritus of Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary. He earned his S.T.M. from Yale University (Columbia Theological Seminary 2015). He wrote Stroup (1997), Stroup (2011) etc.

can find acceptance and understanding in other religious communities. On the contrary the question is whether the church can rediscover the sense in which it stands in and lives out of a tradition, reinterpret that tradition so that it is intelligible in the contemporary world, and offer a clear description of Christian faith which makes it relevant to the urgent questions and issues of modern society.

Stroup's conviction is that it is not desirable to approach the issue of Christian identity in Christianity today sociologically or psychologically because of its theological nature (Stroup 1997:24).

According to Stroup (1997:24), there are four important symptoms of the present crisis in Christian identity, which are widespread phenomena in the church: "the curious status of the Bible in the church's life, the church's loss of its theological tradition, the absence of theological reflection at all levels of the church's life, and the inability of many Christians to make sense out of their personal identity by means of Christian faith."

What is important here is Stroup's insight into the inseparable relation between Christian identity and the life of Christian communities.

To Stroup, the four symptoms mentioned above do not imply an extreme pessimism about the church. Stroup (1997:24-25) says,

The fact that these symptoms are prevalent does not mean the demise of the church is imminent. The symptoms do suggest that there is a problem in the church's general health which deserves serious attention.

Stroup has proposed a way of resolving the present crisis in Christian identity by analyzing "the structure and the formation of Christian identity" and by examining "the symptoms in light of a clear understanding of the nature of Christian identity" (Stroup 1997:38). For this purpose, he examines so-called *Neo-orthodoxy* in the first half of the twentieth century for the rediscovery of the significance of revelation and then focuses on the recent "use of narrative in theology" (1997:84).

According to West (1984:145), Stroup maintains a realistic position, to be more precise, “the referential claims of the crucial New Testament narratives.”<sup>92</sup> West (1984:146) says,

[I]t is quite plausible to hold that Stroup subscribes to some version of metaphysical realism.

West (1984:146) adds that Stroup attempts to distinguish chronicle from history and history from narrative, but it seems just confusing. West (1984:146) says,

On the one hand, he is cautious against any form of the Myth of the Given. On the other hand, if chronicles are interpretation-laden, then history is an interpretation of a primitive interpretation and narrative is an interpretation of an interpretation of a primitive interpretation. It then becomes unclear how this latter claim is to be reconciled with his referential or metaphysical realist claims about certain gospel narratives.

As observed above, Stroup’s concern for Christian identity led him to narrative theology and has an apparent ecclesiological implication.

#### **4.2.1.2.9 Ronald F. Thiemann<sup>93</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern**

Fiorenza *et al.* (2014:xvii-xxi) summarizes Thiemann’s contribution to theology as follows. In Thiemann (1985), he approaches the topic of revelation by considering “the North American pragmatic tradition’s critique of foundationalism and its emphasis on practice” and by taking into account “Ludwig Wittgenstein’s understanding of meaning” and “Richard Bernstein’s merging of American and European philosophical traditions” (Fiorenza *et al.* 2014:xviii). Thiemann connected the concept of revelation with “a

---

<sup>92</sup> Stroup’s realistic position, however, has some exceptions: concerning “the creation and patriarchal stories,” he admits “nonreferential claims” (West 1984:145).

<sup>93</sup> Thiemann (1946-2012) taught at Haverford College in Pennsylvania for ten years, and after joining Harvard University he served as Benjamin Bussey Professor of Theology and former Dean of Harvard Divinity School and acted as a Faculty Affiliate at the Kennedy School’s Harvard Center for Public Leadership. He earned his M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. from Yale University (The Harvard University Gazette 1998). He wrote Thiemann (1985), Thiemann (1991), Thiemann (1996) etc.

narrative theology that underscored the importance of narratives for identity” (Fiorenza *et al.* 2014:xviii). It might be said that such a postliberal tendency in Thiemann was influenced by his fellows at Yale, George Lindbeck and Hans Frei.<sup>94</sup> Thiemann’s anti-foundationalist and narrative-emphasizing position led finally to his public theology (Fiorenza *et al.* 2014:xviii). Thiemann (1991) stresses the importance of “the role of the church in public life,” and Thiemann (1996) argues that we have to accept “revisionist versions of liberalism and communitarianism” and to focus particularly on two aspects of religious faith, that is, its communal and public aspects (Fiorenza *et al.* 2014:xix).

In Thiemann’s public theology the church has a central importance. Comparing Thiemann with Jürgen Moltmann, Paeth (2008:96) says,

Thiemann articulates the importance of the church in light of the tradition and narrative that it embodies, whereas for Moltmann, the church is the community that is called to live in anticipation of the coming kingdom of God. The church for both defines Christian identity in the larger social context, and offers for Christians a basis for moral action. Additionally, both recognize that the church as a gathered community of believers exists in and has responsibility toward the larger horizon of society.

In brief, the postliberal theologian Thiemann who seeks to apply “the internal logic of the Christian faith” to the modern world lays a great emphasis upon the importance of the public character of the church (Thiemann 1985:74). To illustrate, it can be said that

The church is a community of persons, reflecting the communion of persons in the Trinitarian life. But just as the Trinitarian life of God is not closed off and insular, so the church is a public church in light of the Trinity (Paeth 2008:45).

---

<sup>94</sup> Fiorenza *et al.* (2014:xvii) witnesses that the topic of Thiemann’s dissertation, “*A Conflict of Perspectives: The Debate between Karl Barth and Werner Elert*” was advised by Lindbeck and Frei.

It is clear that Thiemann's postliberal and public theology has an ecclesiological significance.

#### **4.2.1.2.10 David S. Yeago<sup>95</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern**

According to Treier (2012:92), there is a branch of postliberalism, namely, the movement of theological interpretation of Scripture. A characteristic feature of this movement is the objection to "historical criticism – at least its hegemony and effects on the church" (Treier 2012:92). Theological interpretation, or theological exegesis, argues for "biblical exegesis with churchly interests" (Treier 2012:92). It also stresses the importance of a holistic reading of the Bible which connects a text with "the Bible's overall narrative" and with other texts, along with recognition of the role of the church to receive and transmit these texts (Treier 2012:92). Moreover, it focuses on reading the Bible "within the Rule of faith," on retrieving "precritical, spiritual, exegetical practices," and on rediscovering "particular doctrinal traditions" (Treier 2012:92-93). The last feature of theological interpretation to be noted is its concern for "the church in the world," which means that we need to make demands of "critical perspectives to open up fresh readings" (Treier 2012:93). Yeago is a representative of this movement of theological interpretation of Scripture.<sup>96</sup>

As a postliberal Yeago makes the distinction "between "vain repetition" and faithful adherence to the scriptural message" (Pokrifka 2010:67). He is also known as a theologian who differentiates between "the judgments of Scripture" and "conceptual or philosophical terms" used to render the judgments (Pokrifka 2010:67). Yeago's point is that the same judgment of Scripture can be rendered in different conceptual terms

---

<sup>95</sup> Yeago taught at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and served there as the first Michael Peeler Associate Professor of Systematic Theology. He participated in the dialogue between Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Orthodox Church and is a consultant for the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity. He is currently Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics at the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. He earned his M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. from Yale University (North American Lutheran Seminary n.d.). He wrote Yeago (2004) etc.

<sup>96</sup> For this, refer to Contents of Fowl (1997), especially chapter 6. Treier (2008:60) introduces Yeago as a modern example of reading the Bible within the faith-Rule.

(Yeago 1997:93).<sup>97</sup> Thus, the human writers of Scripture and a modern theologian Karl Barth can be considered to “render essentially the same judgment in quite different conceptual terms” (Pokrifka 2010:67). Pokrifka (2010:67) says,

But once those judgments are understood, one can – indeed one should – “re-describe or re-render those judgments” in one’s own conceptual or philosophical terms.

It is in this context which Yeago’s understanding of the expression *homoousion* in the Nicene Creed and the expression *Jesus’ equality with God* in Phil 2 as two different conceptual terms of “the same judgment” about Christ (Pokrifka 2010:67-68). Marshall (2004:93) says,

The concepts of Nicea are not those of Philipians. Yet the judgment – what is predicated about the subject Christ – is the same.

According to Marshall (2004:93), doctrine corresponds with judgments, not with conceptual terms, and the move from the Bible to doctrine is not caused “by systematizing Scripture’s concepts, nor by extracting (e.g., decontextualizing) principles, but rather by discerning and continuing a pattern of judgment rendered in a variety of linguistic, literary, and conceptual forms.”

With regard to the relation between the church and ethics, Yeago, a Lutheran theologian, focuses on two aspects of Luther’s ecclesiological thinking, “namely his emphasis on the sanctifying practices of the Christian community and the public discipline of Christians” (Svensson 2014:181). Yeago highlights Luther’s positive view “on the role of the law as the form of Christian life”, which seems contrary to the usual understanding of Luther. Indeed, Nelson (2013:5) recognizes Yeago’s fair contribution in dealing with those two aspects in German Lutheran theological circles “in the 1930s and during the *Kirchenkampf*.” According to Nelson (2013:5), Yeago gives attention to two different ecclesiologies, that is, ecclesiology focusing on “the invisibility of the

---

<sup>97</sup> This argument of Yeago reminds of Lindbeck’s criticism against the propositional-cognitive theory of doctrine.

church to the exclusion of the church's organization and institutional form(s)," which is supported by Hirsch, Althaus, and Elert, and ecclesiology stressing "ecclesial space" shaped "both in the gathered assembly and in the institutional, and therefore visible, order and offices of the church," which is supported by Bonhoeffer.

Svensson makes much of Yeago's attempt to reconcile those two aspects of Luther's thought on the church. Svensson (2014:181) says,

[Yeago's interpretation] aims at reconciling these two strands by highlighting Luther's own idea that "the inward follows the outward," meaning that "the spiritual grace is inseparable from and dependent for its presence on the bodily and sacramental." This seems to me to be a very fruitful approach, and one that should have priority in relation to approaches that conveniently neglect problematic texts. ... A fruitful research program, therefore, would explore whether the individualistic and spiritualized image of Luther can be modified by a broader and more attentive reading of Luther's texts along the lines sketched by Yeago.

Yeago is also interested in the issue of ecumenical reception. In Yeago (2004) he deals with some aspects of "the large question of what ecumenists call the "reception" of ecumenical agreements," particularly on the basis of his survey on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's recent trend (Yeago 2004:29). For Yeago (2004:30) reception means a positive action of a church as subject, which is accompanied with "ecclesial presuppositions of the process of reception." The problem is that his observation on many cases in our day tells that the present "ecclesial presuppositions of reception" appear to be too problematic "to allow an authentic reception process to occur" (Yeago 2004:30). According to Yeago (2004:30), this problem raises a basic question: what (or who) is the real *subject* of the ecumenical process, especially "when it is said that "a church" receives the results of ecumenical dialogue." Yeago gives an answer to this problem: Ultimately, Ecumenical reception must not be seen as an act of the church but as God's divine act on the church to be re-formed. Yeago (2004:44) says,



Ecumenical reception must be understood not as an action by which competent ecclesial subjects move themselves from division into communion, but as the suffering of God's acts of judgment and mercy by which the ecclesial subject is being re-formed amid the exposure of our present incompetence as a divided people.

In brief, Yeago's postliberal theology which focuses on reading the Bible within the faith-Rule, along with the distinction between theological terms and the judgments of Scripture, carries with it an ecclesiological reflection on the contemporary ecumenical movements.

#### **4 2.1.2.11 David B. Burrell, C.S.C.<sup>98</sup> and his ecclesiastical concern**

In Burrell (2011) he contends that for a desirable comparison of different religious traditions we need to focus on "the pluriform structure" of them. Burrell (2011:1) makes much of Lindbeck's understanding of "doctrine as precipitations or distillations of practice." In other words, like Lindbeck, Burrell (2011:1) understands doctrine as taking secondary order in the community of faith though it plays a clarifying role in a critical situation. Furthermore, Burrell (2011:1) argues that if adhering to particular beliefs is "a practice," then the matter of how to adhere to them will be considered as of paramount importance, and that any attempt to compare different religious traditions has to focus on "personal experience," "artistic re-enactments," "as well as alternative scenarios," because "such is the pluriform richness of religious tradition." Here we can find that Burrell's theology has a postliberal tendency.

There is an important idea in Burrell's theology, the idea of *cross-hatching friendships* among people who hold their own religious tradition. Burrell (2000:20-21) says,

[i]f truth is to be had, it will only be had in a tradition, within a community, in the company of friends. For each of these terms implies the other: tradition

---

<sup>98</sup> Burrell (born 1933), a priest of the congregation of Holy Cross, is currently the Theodore Hesburgh Professor emeritus in Philosophy and Theology at University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana. His concern is for the establishment of a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology. He obtained his doctoral degree from Yale in 1965 (Faith & Leadership 2010). He wrote Burrell (1986), Burrell (2000) etc.

without a sustaining and connecting community is nothing but past history; and we are formed into communities by the cross-hatching of friendships, and especially of friends bound together by their shared faith in a communal goal. So the relation of student to teacher becomes one of fellow travelers on a journey, even when that encounter takes place across several centuries.

In his interview with Faith & Leadership Burrell (2010) says,

You have to be confirmed in your own faith, but you also have to see that there are places where your faith and tradition are missing the ball. Maybe you can gain something from befriending people in other traditions. ... The Muslim scholars that came up with the “A Common Word” document remind us that if you add up Muslims and Christians you have more than half the population of the world. We’d better get our act together or we won’t have peace.

Constantine-Jackson (2012:37) describes the focus of Burrell’s theological thought as this. The ways to truth are possible only through friendships. In other words, the ways to truth must be considered as “personal yet correlatively cosmic,” which means it demands dialogues with others and journeys with them. Hallisey (2012:xx) analyzes the concept of friendship in Burrell. Friendship means “self-transcendence.” Hallisey (2012:xx) says,

It is in our very human ability to have friends and be a friend, to find another self in another person, that most of us experience for the first time, the pleasures, the goods, and the good of self-transcendence. And self-transcendence is at the very heart of the activity of understanding.

Citing John Ross Carter<sup>99</sup>’s suggestion that interreligious colloquia should be based on the concept of friendship, Hallisey (2012:xx) points out that “some sort of

---

<sup>99</sup> For Carter’s experience of friendships among people with different religious traditions, see Carter (2012:8).

transcendence will occur between friends that will allow us to be “formed into new communities by the cross-hatching of friendships.”

Hauerwas (2007:293) analyzes the reason why Burrell has taken interest in the Jewish and the Islamic: it is “not because he is a cosmopolitan but because he is a Catholic”.<sup>100</sup> In addition, Hauerwas (2007:293) defines Burrell as an exemplification of Howard Yoder’s conviction that “the closer we are drawn to Jesus the closer we must be drawn to those who do not pray as Christians do to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

It can, therefore, be said that Burrell’s postliberal theology has a broad ecumenical implication.

#### **4.2.2 A conclusion from external evidence**

According to Placher (1997:344-345), the major characteristics of postliberal movement in which Lindbeck has been involved are summarized as follows: firstly, it has a ‘non-foundationalist’ character; secondly, it does not focus on systematic apologetics, but it seeks for ‘*ad hoc* connections’ with its surrounding disciplines, such as ‘philosophy’, ‘art’, or ‘culture’; thirdly, it does not attend to the commonalities between religions but to their particularities, or differences. It opposes the theological liberals’ argument that religions ‘are all saying the same thing’; fourthly, it stresses the importance of the roles of ‘the scriptural stories’ as the basis of the Christians’ identification of ‘God and the Christian community’, of their understanding of the world and of ‘their own lives’. The fourth characteristic of postliberal movement puts an emphasis on the community of faith grounded on, and shaped by biblical narratives. It implies that postliberal movement bears in itself an obvious ecclesiastical concern.

---

<sup>100</sup> For the relation between truth (or wisdom) and friendship in Thomas Aquinas, see Cuddeback (2004:26-33). Burrell (2004) presents historical examples of the ways to truth through friendship, such as Aquinas’s debt to Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher in the twelfth-century who communicated with his contemporary Islamic philosophers and scientists. Burrell (1986) shows that Aquinas, especially his thought of God, was indebted to the Islamic polymath Avicenna and the Jewish philosopher Maimonides; his account of God takes superiority over theirs because of his own distinction between existence and essence.

Lindbeck is also a theologian involved in the Yale school.<sup>101</sup> During Lindbeck's time, the theological current of Yale University differed from that of the University of Chicago. Whereas the latter focused on religion as a universal human phenomenon, and emphasized a Tillichian 'liberal or revisionist' approach to theology, the former attended to 'particular religious traditions', such as 'Christianity or Judaism or Buddhism', rather than to religion in general (Placher 1997:343-344). Placher (1997:344) summarizes the characteristics of the Yale school as follows: firstly, it attends to 'the particularities of individual religious traditions'; secondly, it focuses on 'the shape' and 'the structures' of 'the biblical texts' as they are; thirdly, it is concerned with how the 'biblical texts' relate to 'the communities' of faith; in other words, it takes interest in how the biblical stories shape 'the identities of those communities, their members, and their understandings of the God they worship'. Of those characteristics of the Yale school, the third reveals its ecclesiastical concern. It implies that the Yale school theologians, including Lindbeck, share an ecclesiastical concern as their basic concern.

In conclusion, an ecclesiastical concern is obviously found in the theological movements in which Lindbeck has been involved: the postliberal theology and the Yale school. In other words, those two movements treated the concern for the church, or the community of faith, seriously: they took it as an important agendum to be discussed by contemporary theologians. In brief, the ecclesiastical concern is not just a matter of Lindbeck's personal interest; rather, it is a characteristic of the theological movements in which Lindbeck has been involved.

### **4.3 A conclusion**

---

<sup>101</sup> Concerning the relation between postliberals and the Yale school, Placher (1997:343) states that most postliberals were either lecturers or students at Yale and were deeply affected by H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962), a Yale theologian, and his ideas.

It can, therefore, be said that by the two kinds of evidence, internal and external evidences, the hypothesis of this dissertation is substantiated. Lindbeck's ultimate concern, or the hermeneutical core of his theology, is an ecclesiastical concern. In this respect, Lindbeck's theology can be defined as an ecclesiology.

The following chapter will analyze Lindbeck's ecclesiology. Some of its characteristics will be examined and be assessed from a Reformed perspective. To do this task, this dissertation will offer an understanding of Reformed ecumenicity as the standard for assessment. Then, the chapter will, from a Reformed perspective, examine and evaluate ethical implications of Lindbeck's ecclesiology.

## **Chapter 5. A Reformed Assessment of Lindbeck's Ecclesiology and Its Ethical Implications**

As seen in the previous chapter, Lindbeck's ultimate concern is an ecclesiastical one. In this regard, this dissertation defines Lindbeck's theology as an ecclesiology. Now, this chapter seeks to analyze Lindbeck's ecclesiology and make an assessment of it from a Reformed perspective. In addition, this chapter will analyze, in a Reformed view, the ethical implications that Lindbeck's ecclesiology has, and make an assessment of them.

### **5.1 An analysis of Lindbeck's ecclesiology**

In the center of Lindbeck's ecclesiology is his passion for ecumenism. The goal that he seeks is the unity of the church. The whole of his life and thoughts are motivated by, involved in, committed to, and led by ecumenism. Therefore, Lindbeck's ecclesiology can be defined as an ecumenical ecclesiology. Two kinds of ecumenism have arisen during the twentieth century when Lindbeck was working. The one focused on intra-Christian relations, the representative form of which was unitive ecumenism. The other focused on the interreligious relations, the representative form of which was a wider ecumenism. The former, among these kinds of ecumenism, is the one in which Lindbeck is involved. Since his confrontation of unitive ecumenism during the days of studying abroad in French in the 1950's, he has studied it to accomplish the ideal and carried it out for all his life.<sup>102</sup> Wider ecumenism is related to

---

<sup>102</sup> Even since his retirement in 1993, Lindbeck has taken interest in the renewal of unitive ecumenism. He argues that it has to originate from "within Christian communities without the support of external pressure" (Lindbeck 2005:29).

a new paradigm of ecumenical movement, namely 'God-world-church' paradigm<sup>103</sup>, which emerged after the 1968 Uppsala Fourth Assembly of the WCC (Lindbeck 2005:28-29). This paradigm implies that ecumenical movement has various goals and has to let them flourish and interact. It is contrary to traditionalist view that ecumenical activities have to focus on a single goal and have a single nature. Wider ecumenism is also associated with Life and Work ecumenism claiming that 'the world sets the agenda'<sup>104</sup> (Lindbeck 2005:28-29). Lindbeck (2005:29) argues that what is problematic about wider ecumenism is the failure to realize that interreligious dialogues are categorically distinct from the search for the unity of the church, and that wider ecumenism has difficulty in solving so pressing problems of religious pluralism.

Lindbeck's ecclesiology has some characteristics. Firstly, it is a unitive ecumenicity-centred ecclesiology. Secondly, it is an ecclesiology as a diachronic approach to the unity of the church. Thirdly, it is an ecclesiology seeking theological legitimacy. Fourthly, it is an ecclesiology seeking an Israel-like church. Fifthly, it is an ecclesiology based on postliberalism. The following is an examination of each of these characteristics.

### **5.1.1 A unitive ecumenicity-centred ecclesiology**

In the center of Lindbeck's ecclesiology is unitive ecumenism. First of all, unitive ecumenism is distinguished from interdenominationalism that he has experienced during his childhood in China.<sup>105</sup> Both unitive ecumenism and interdenominationalism are concerned about the unity of the church. According to Lindbeck (2004:390), the former sought the unity of the church in a true sense, while the latter did not, for the former, unlike the latter, is not based upon churches' commitment to denominationally

---

<sup>103</sup> It is in contrast with the old paradigm of ecumenical movement, namely 'God-church-world' paradigm (Lindbeck 2005:28).

<sup>104</sup> It is in contrast with the traditionalist notion that it is "the church's own compass and rudder that determine direction" of ecumenism (Lindbeck 2005:29).

<sup>105</sup> According to Thompson (2014:257), the origin of interdenominationalism is connected with evangelical Christians in the eighteenth century: their "personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord" has been considered as more important than "the formal marks of church membership" or "differences between denominations."

divisive doctrines and practices. Also, the latter is different from the former in that it does not consider mutual helpfulness as the essence of ecclesial unity. For Lindbeck, as long as the churches are not bound to one another's concerns and needs, they cannot attain the unity of the church even though they worship and commune together, recognize one another's practical issues, and try mutual cooperation (Lindbeck 2004:395). Therefore, interdenominationalism is not authentically ecumenical, but "a mere federation of independent churches" (Lindbeck 2004:395). On the other hand, unitive ecumenism not only sensitively and obligately responds to one another's concerns and needs, but also insists that they need to reduce their independence and limit their autonomy (Lindbeck 2004:395). Lindbeck (2004:398) argues that the leitmotif in the unity of the church needs to be the pursuit of "the good of the other's church as well as one's own", namely "mutual helpfulness" or "drawing closer in Christ." In brief, Lindbeck's disappointment at interdenominationalism can be explained by his recognition that it is not authentically ecumenical. This disappointment, then, makes him commit to unitive ecumenism for all his life.

Unitive ecumenism has the following characteristics. Firstly, it seeks the visible unity of the church. It aims at ecclesial unity without rejecting the participants' own identities, and for this aim, the participants have to undergo profound changes in order to reach full communion.<sup>106</sup> So, it is distinguished from "the conversion of individuals or groups from one ecclesial allegiance to another" (Lindbeck 2005:28).

Secondly, unitive ecumenism is in accord with the so-called convergence ecumenism. Convergence ecumenism seeks the visible unity of the church by focusing on the points of agreement and minimizing those of disagreement of ecclesial bodies. It contributed to the formation of the World Council of Churches, and affected many ecumenical documents such as the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church.

Lindbeck (2005:28) describes convergence ecumenism as follows. In its early stage, few people supported this view, and the Roman Catholic Church was cautious about

---

<sup>106</sup> Full communion here means the state where integration can truly be made. When it will take place is beyond our knowledge (Lindbeck 2004:394).



this view. Its first and well-known catholic ecumenical manifesto is Yves Congar, O.P.'s *Chrétiens désunis* (Divided Christendom, 1937), which had a great effect on the Second Vatican Council. Convergence ecumenism was dominant in ecumenical discussions until its apogee around 1970, – three representative documents in this period was '*the unity we seek*' by the WCC's New Delhi (1961), '*Unitatis redintegratio*' (Decree on Ecumenism, 1964) by the Second Vatican Council and '*Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*' by the WCC's Faith and Order – since then it has been in decline. Though convergence movement on doctrinal issues went on even in the period of decline, – for example, the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church's confirmation of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999) – these attempts, in fact, should be understood as the outcome of earlier decades' well-advanced discussions.

In short, unitive ecumenism seeks visible unity of the church based on the notion of convergence.

### **5.1.2 Ecclesiology as a diachronic approach to the unity of the church**

Lindbeck's ecclesiology is a diachronic approach to the unity of the church. It finds the fundamental cause of disunity of modern Western churches in an event of the past mainstream Christian history, namely the sixteenth century Reformation – more precisely, the Reformation schism. According to this perspective, a true way to achieve today's unity of the churches is to overcome ecclesial division that Reformation has brought about. In this regard, unitive ecumenism is distinct from interdenominationalism which focuses on the present rather than the past. Interdenominationalism basically aims at solving the present problems, not the past ones. For example, evangelical corporation in the eighteenth century as the first model of interdenominationalism in history was carried out through two needs of those days – new kinds of method of preaching the gospel, “beyond what local congregations, whether Anglican parish churches or Dissenting meetings, had done in the past” and a new political movement such as “the campaign against the slave trade” (Thompson 2014:257-258). In brief, interdenominationalism is considered as a synchronic

approach to ecclesial unity. Therefore, it might disagree with unitive ecumenism which considers the overcoming of the schism of the sixteenth century Reformation as today's primary task of the unity of the church.

Unitive ecumenism demands a new understanding of the relationship between the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church, which considers the Reformation as a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church. Unitive ecumenism holds that the recovery of the continuity between the thoughts of the Reformers and the Roman Catholic heritage is of benefit to both the Roman Catholic Church and Lutheran churches. The former can reintegrate "both the biblical and the traditionally catholic strengths of the Reformers" into the Catholicism, while the latter can recover the lost "catholic heritage the Reformers retained" (Lindbeck 2004:396). Lindbeck suggests that such continuity of unitive ecumenism is supported by the Augsburg Confession, the most authoritative confession of Lutheran churches.

Augsburg argues that none of the Reformation teachings as it describes them are opposed to the catholic consensus of Rome itself "so far as can be observed in the writings of the Fathers," such as Ambrose and Augustine. Consequently, Rome cannot legitimately break communion with the churches of the Augsburg Confession (which originally was the official name of the Lutherans, as it still is in France). Moreover, as soon as freedom is given to the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments in accordance with the gospel, reunion with Rome becomes possible. ... From this perspective, what happens in Roman Catholicism affects Lutheran identity. If the freedom of the gospel prevails, then a separate Lutheran ecclesial existence loses its legitimacy, and rejoining the Roman communion becomes mandatory (Lindbeck 2004:397).

According to Lindbeck (2004:397), the Augsburg Confession expects the retention of (now, reintegration into) the historic episcopal polity, and furthermore is positive on the acceptability of a reformed papacy – "providing the primacy of the Roman bishop is

understood as of human rather than divine right.” Kibira<sup>107</sup> (1980:3-4) describes the Augsburg Confession as follows. The Augsburg Confession is based on the Scripture and the catholic faith, but corrects some wrongs in the Roman Catholic Church. It seeks the unity of divided churches, keeps the faith rather than oppresses the other party, and focuses on the points of agreement over against those of disagreement. As a Lutheran heritage of faith, the Confession is a unique attempt to express Catholicism in Lutheran teachings. It basically maintains the scriptural principles and the catholic faith. In other words, it was not motivated by any revolutionary spirit. Hence, it has, since its inception, remained the greatest single historical statement of Lutheran identity to successive ages on all the regions of the world.

Among those who claim the continuity between the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church are “evangelical-catholic”<sup>108</sup> Lutherans. They regard ‘return to Rome’<sup>109</sup> as an ecumenical goal. The ‘return to Rome’ does not mean here a simple return to Rome: it means rather the visible ecclesial unity “through profound and difficult reforms” in both the Roman Catholic Church and the separated churches. Those who are committed to return to Rome envision that “[a]ll parties will be mutually enriched and purified as they draw closer together” (Lindbeck 2004:394). In this context, Yves Congar replaced ‘return’ with ‘convergence’ and considered the convergence as the essence of ecumenical work the World Council of Churches would seek (Lindbeck 2004:394). Lindbeck (2004:397) says that evangelical-catholic Christians holding the idea of return to Rome give ecumenical priority to overcoming the Reformation schism. This is the proximate, rather than the ultimate, aim, in that healing the ecclesial division caused by the Reformation can facilitate “the reconciliation of Eastern and Western churches with one another and among

---

<sup>107</sup> Josiah M. Kibira (1925-1988), a bishop in the Lutheran Church in Tanzania, served the Lutheran World Federation as the first African president (1977-1984) (Noll 2011:136).

<sup>108</sup> Weigel (2013:4) defines Evangelical Catholicism as “the Catholicism that is being born, often with great difficulty, through the work of the Holy Spirit in prompting deep Catholic reform – a reform that meets the challenges posed to Christian orthodoxy and Christian life by the riptides of change that have reshaped world culture since the nineteenth century.” Evangelical-catholic does not simply mean becoming Catholics who adapt certain ecclesial practices and forms of worship from evangelicals (Weigel 2013:3).

<sup>109</sup> Lindbeck first encountered the idea of return to Rome through the relationship with members of the French Catholic *avant-garde* while studying in France (Lindbeck2004:394).

themselves”, and further encourage “witnessing together to their common faith in Jesus Christ” (Lindbeck 2004:397).

Lindbeck (2004:397) acknowledges that this evangelical-catholic perspective is reflected in all aspects of his ecumenical career.

In short, unitive ecumenism is a diachronic approach to the unity of the church through overcoming the Reformation schism.

### **5.1.3 Ecclesiology seeking theological legitimacy**

In fact, unitive ecumenism is not a theological enterprise. Lindbeck’s ecumenical commitment is a practical and realistic one rather than a theoretical and academic one. Therefore, unitive ecumenism, like other church movements, has periods of rise and decline in the process of development. Generally, it is considered that unitive ecumenism continued to rise until the appearance of the Second Vatican Council and its following ecumenical dialogues and then declined. Lindbeck did not consider his task as establishing the new structure of systematic theology, but as an effort to give theological legitimacy to ecumenical movement in which he has been involved. In order to achieve this, he examined the nature of doctrine. Through the course of his examination he criticized traditional understandings of the doctrine, namely, the propositional-cognitivist approach to doctrine or the experiential-expressivist approach to doctrine, and also suggested his new theory of doctrine, that is, the cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine, as an alternative. Generally, theories of doctrine are dealt in the introductory section of systematic theology books.<sup>110</sup> This means that the knowledge of the nature of doctrine is the basis of the particulars of systematic theology, such as the doctrine of God, Christology, Anthropology, Hamartiology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. Therefore, we can make an assessment that in order to secure the legitimacy of ecumenical movement, Lindbeck made a unique attempt to newly understand and interpret the nature of doctrine as an important topic of the

---

<sup>110</sup> See Bavinck (2003), Berkhof (1979), and Berkhof (1996).

introductory section of systematic theology books. Hence, his ecumenical commitment has theological legitimacy and is appealing on the basis of a new doctrinal hermeneutics.

In other words, ecclesial unity without rejecting the participants' own identities as a goal of unitive ecumenism is supported by the main idea of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine, which is doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation. The fundamental motive of such a doctrinal work is his desire for reconciliation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches which have been in conflict for about 500 years since the sixteenth century. The primary cause of the schism of these two ecclesial bodies is their doctrinal differences, especially, on the justification by faith. The problem, as Lindbeck understands, is that no traditional understanding of doctrine – whether it approaches doctrine in the propositional-cognitivist or the experiential-expressivist way – can accomplish the reconciliation of conflicting ecclesial bodies with doctrinal differences. Therefore, Lindbeck proposes the cultural-linguistic theory of doctrine as a solution. For the viewpoint of the cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine considers doctrine as a rule rather than a truth claim, and then seeks for reconciliation without doctrinal capitulation

In brief, Lindbeck gives theological legitimacy to unitive ecumenism through his unique quest of the nature of the doctrine. He criticizes traditional understandings of doctrine, that is, the propositional-cognitivist approach to doctrine and the experiential-expressivist approach to doctrine, and proposes the cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine as an alternative. The fundamental motive of his quest on the nature of the doctrine is his desire to overcome the Reformation schism caused by doctrinal differences and finally to achieve the unity of the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches.

#### **5.1.4 Ecclesiology seeking an Israel-like church**

One of the important characteristics of Lindbeck's ecclesiology is his concern for the Jews. Lindbeck (1990:492-494) describes the background of his concern for the Jews

as follows. In his life, there is basically a tendency toward philo-Semitism.<sup>111</sup> In his whole life, he has resisted against Christianity's becoming Marcionite, a characteristic of some post-Reformation Lutheranism, which means it comes to spiritualization and privatization with the neglect of Hebrew Bible. At Yale, he was influenced by the canonical reading of Brevard Childs and was acquainted with Hans Frei's narrative and figural interpretation of the Bible. He finally realized that it is only by the postcritical retrieval of premodern hermeneutical methods of pre-Enlightenment era which the abiding importance of Israel (including modern Judaism) and Hebrew Bible for Christians can be recognized. His affection for the Jews began in the '70s and is reflected in his work *The Nature of Doctrine*. He regards his ecclesiology as an Israelology.

Importantly, Lindbeck's concern for the Jews does not simply mean Christian-Jewish relations but has an ecumenical implication: He seeks for the retrieval of Israel-like church. Lindbeck (2004:405-408) gives the historical and theological account about it as follows.

Since Justin Martyr in the second century, the notion of the gentile church to Israelhood has been consistently related to the claim to denial of this heritage to the Jews. The idea that the Jews were not God's chosen people anymore because of God's revoking the covenant with the Jews and God's replacement of them with the church due to their unbelief becomes widespread among the gentile Christians. The problem is that the following point is acknowledged persuasively: This supersessionism is generally considered as the major source of Western Christian nations' anti-Semitism, and that this anti-Semitism is the main cause of the Holocaust. Since the Second Vatican Council the Roman Catholic Church and other ecclesial bodies have condemned the supersessionism with the argument that God has not revoked the covenant with the Jews, that is, they remain God's chosen people. The problem is that these condemnations extend to the notion of Israel-like church, for this notion is considered

---

<sup>111</sup> Philo-Semitism, or Judeophilia, refers to a love of the Jews and their culture, history, beliefs, and ideas (Lassner & Trubowitz 2008:7).

as “the fountainhead of all supersessionist evils”: To speak highly of it is considered as the same as praising Nazism (Lindbeck 2004:406).

Lindbeck insists that extreme supersessionist misuses of the notion of the church as Israel should be rejected but its communal benefits should be examined properly by scholars. He analyzes modern supersessionism in the last three centuries as follows. Firstly, the notion of Israel-like church is increasingly considered negatively, and it has been doubtful that “Christianity’s expropriating claim to Israelhood continues unabated and remains the major source of its anti-Judaism,” but the fact is that the rejection of the church as Israel has replaced its expropriation (Lindbeck 2004:407). Secondly, modern supersessionism has a more serious problem structurally than the past supersessionism. The latter identified Hebrew Bible with the roots of Christianity, even though it considered the rabbinic branches as having been truncated because of their unbelief, whereas the former does not acknowledge or doubt Hebrew Bible’s position as the roots of Christianity. Lindbeck (2004:407) says that Christianity in our age tends to be “quasi-Marcionite” because of “its denial of affinities except purely accidental historical ones to what was (and often still is) regarded as abysmally primitive Hebrew Bible religion.” Recalling the recent magisterial claim that the covenant God made with the Jews is irrevocable, he examined the possibility and desirability of retrieving Israel-like church in a nonsupersessionist manner for the sake of ecclesial unity. He, then, reached the conclusion that a nonsupersessionist Israel-like ecclesiology is biblically possible and is pragmatically needed for ecumenical benefits, for instance, having much chance of involving heretofore resistant evangelicals and Pentecostals in contemporary ecumenical movement. He adds that the notion of Israel-like church would be embodied only under the condition of upheavals difficult to depict but all too easy to predict.

In short, Lindbeck’s ecclesiology involves his concern for the Jews, and his concern has an ecumenical bearing. He desires for the retrieval of Israel-like church, and his notion of Israel-like church has a nonsupersessionist tendency, which is against modern supersessionism supportive of anti-Semitism, based on so-called replacement theology.

### 5.1.5 Ecclesiology based on postliberalism

Lindbeck's ecumenical passion was not confined to the search for the visible unity of the church but was extended to the topic of religious relations. Though not entirely agreeing with wider ecumenism which focuses on interreligious rather than intra-Christian relations, he tries to answer the question of 'How does the church live in this world?' or 'How ought the church to live in this world?' According to Buckley (2002:xi), Lindbeck's theology is "deeply attentive to joys and griefs of our world in a way that claims that world for the Church, Jesus Christ and the triune God," based on the acknowledgement that the world is not "a single, homogeneous thing" but "a world of particular cultures, languages, religions and people." Buckley (2002:xi) assesses Lindbeck's theology as "[a] theology of a particular community with a universal mission."<sup>112</sup>

Postliberalism is a theological scheme for Lindbeck's concern with interreligious relations. He reasons that a postliberal perspective is required for interreligious relations appropriate for our postmodern age. Lindbeck (1984) is, in a sense, the embodiment of his postliberal ideas<sup>113</sup>. In this book, his postliberal perspective is reflected on two points. One is his interdisciplinary tendency, and the other is his cultural-linguistic view. The former means his use of elements of Clifford Geertz's cultural anthropology, Peter Berger's sociology, Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and William A Christian's philosophy of religion (Buckley 2002:xi). The latter means that human experience is formed and even constituted by cultural and linguistic elements (Lindbeck 1984:34) and that "cultures and religions are analogous to

---

<sup>112</sup> With regard to this, Buckley (2002:xi) regards Lindbeck's theology as having worldly character.

<sup>113</sup> It, however, has to be noted that the original motivation of Lindbeck's writing of *The Nature of Doctrine* is his passion for unitive ecumenism, that is, his desire for the visible unity of the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches (Buckley 2002:xi). Buckley (2002:xi) assesses *The Nature of Doctrine* as an introduction to so-called comparative dogmatics, that is, "a proposal of what the Church ought to teach on a range of matters, based on broad and deep comparison of evangelical and catholic churches."



languages, and languages are embedded in the forms of life of diverse and particular cultures and religions” (Buckley 2002:xi).

Postliberalism which became popular in the late twentieth century is a postmodern theological movement against theological liberalism<sup>114</sup> affected by modernism comprising the humanistic element of Renaissance in the fourteenth to the sixteenth century and the rationalistic element of the Enlightenment in the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Lindbeck’s postliberal theology implies that though Christianity has lost its position as the dominant religion, it might exist still as a religion in the postmodern world that emphasizes plurality, and that Christianity as a religion should coexist with other religions, and for this purpose it should acknowledge and respect cultural-linguistic uniqueness or particularity of each of religious traditions. In short, Lindbeck’s postliberal theology is his theological effort to build Christianity appropriate to a postmodern society, in which the plurality and the relativity are the core.

Lindbeck as a postliberal views each of religious traditions, including Christianity, as an overarching story, with its own world, internal logic, and rules of interpretation which can be understood only within a religious community. He also stresses the uniqueness and particularity of each religion instead of seeking to find universal foundations of religion as theological liberals do.

For a proper understanding of postliberalism, it is necessary to first examine theological liberalism which it opposes and seeks to overcome. Theological liberalism seeks to reshape Christian belief in the light of modernism with the conviction that the survival of Christianity depends on its accommodation to modern paradigm (Grenz 1999:386). Theological liberals appreciate the Enlightenment because it freed religion, especially Christianity, from any conventional authority and respected individuals’ right to question and reconstruct the traditional system of faith (Grenz 1999:386). Concerning the treatment of the Scripture, they separated the core of the Gospel from the disposable husk comprised pre-modern ideas and expressions by using modern historical-critical methods of biblical interpretation (Grenz 1999:386). They maintained

---

<sup>114</sup> Among those who initiated classical Protestant liberalism are Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), Adolf Harnack (1851-1930), and Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) (Grenz 1999:386).

that the core of the Gospel is found in Jesus' ethical lessons in the New Testament – especially in his Sermon on the Mount – and that the kingdom of God is seen only through living in accordance with Jesus' ethical teachings (Grenz 1999:386).

Theological liberalism has been challenged by some poignant criticisms since the World War I and II in the twentieth century. McGrath (1996:122-134) describes the points of such criticisms as follows. Firstly, theological liberals understand that human beings are too optimistic and even naïve. They try to build a Utopia in the present world while neglecting the fatal faultiness and weakness of human beings. Secondly, they have a theological disposition of being too foundationalist. Just as the Enlightenment sought to set modern epistemological truth on the foundation of universal rationality, theological liberalism sought to build religion on the foundation of universal experience, universal culture, or universal ethics. The problem is that universal things they suggest for the foundation could be actually experiential fictions to reflect a mindset peculiar to Western citizens, and that they could be trapped in so-called reductionism. In other words, they have a possibility to reduce Christianity to their universal principles, rejecting its uniqueness or particularity. Thirdly, theological liberalism results in the secularization of Christianity. The belief of the theological liberals is that the survival of Christianity depends on its accommodation to modernism, especially modernism of humanistic and rationalistic character. To theological liberals, therefore, Christianity is basically understood as a modernism-accommodated Christianity, in other words, a secularized Christianity. McGrath (1996:122) comments that such an accommodations view might be the most distinctive feature of theological liberalism. McGrath (1996:133) defines the secularization of Christianity as “the potential enslavement or debasement of Christian thought through the intrusion of alien assumptions resulting from a deficient theological method, through which ideas originating from outside the church are allowed to assume a controlling influence within it.”

Placher (1997:344) introduces main features of postliberalism that are distinguished from theological liberalism. Firstly, postliberalism has a non-foundationalist tendency. Like the recent trend in philosophy, which is supported by W. V. O. Quine, Wilfred Sellars, and Richard Rorty, postliberal theologians reject the claim “that knowledge is grounded in a set of non-inferential, self-evident beliefs” (Thiemann 1985:158). They

hold that human experience has an interpretation-laden character. Secondly, it does not basically seek systematic apologetics: it rejects any non-Christian or extra-biblical framework, philosophical or cultural, in which Christian faith can be defended. Instead, it acknowledges the importance and necessity of *ad hoc* apologetics as a means by which to maintain a close contact with the outer intellectual world. Thirdly, it focuses on the differences among religious traditions rather than seeking to find the same thing among them. Christian (1972:5), a Yale philosopher of religion, says that despite “the generous impulse which often prompts people to harmonize the doctrine of the world religions, that understanding one another does not always lead to agreement and that respect for one another does not depend on agreement.” Fourthly, it emphasizes the Bible stories which shape the Christian community and preserve its communal identity. Postliberals’ focus on biblical narratives procures the title narrative theology for their theological stance. Narrative theologians point out that individualistic readings of the Bible would bring the problem of the silence of Scripture in a Christian community and try to solve the problem (Hauerwas 1993:27; Stroup 1981:26). One of the solutions to the problem which they offered is to draw from a contemporary interdisciplinary discovery that stories of tribes or communities play a role in expressing their communal understanding and interpretation of reality.

In short, Lindbeck initiates postliberalism in order to seek his ecumenical goal, that is, interreligious relation with the unity of the church, for he believes that postliberal perspective would be appropriate to a postmodern world which emphasizes cultural plurality and the relativity of values since the twentieth century. In other words, he thinks that theological liberals’ universalistic and foundationalist tendency is not appropriate for a postmodern age. Lindbeck’s postliberal theology is deeply involved in his new paradigm in seeing and approaching the world, namely the cultural-linguistic theory of doctrine and religion. Postliberals are convinced that not only the division of churches, especially due to doctrinal differences, but also the conflicts among different religions can be only solved by mutual respect for the particularity of each party based on its own community with its communal identity-holding stories.

### **5.1.6 A conclusion**

The analyses above might be summarized as follows. Lindbeck's ecumenical passion takes the center of Lindbeck's ecclesiology. In his same age, two kinds of ecumenical movements have risen. One is unitive ecumenism that focused on the unity of the church, while the other is wider ecumenism that emphasized interreligious relations. Among both kinds of ecumenical movements, the object of Lindbeck's prime concern is about the former. For all his life Lindbeck has taken part in studying unitive ecumenism since he first encountered. Lindbeck's ecclesiology has the following characteristics. Firstly, it is a unitive ecumenicity-centred ecclesiology. Unitive ecumenism seeks the visible unity of the church and the unity by the principle of convergence, that is, ecclesial unity without doctrinal capitulation, unlike interdenominationalism that he underwent in his youth. For this, it requires that ecclesial bodies who are involved in ecumenical discussions not only sensitively and obligatedly respond, but also reduce their independence and limit their autonomy. It is in contrast with interdenominationalism seeking for the federation of independent churches. Secondly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology is a diachronic approach to the unity of the church. Unitive ecumenism Lindbeck seeks defines the primary task of ecumenical movement as overcoming the Reformation schism in the sixteenth century, for the schism is understood as the fundamental cause of the division of the church. It is necessary to recognize the Reformation as a reform within the Roman Catholic Church in order to solve the Reformation schism. And the continuity between both sides is supported by the Augsburg Confession, the most authoritative confession of the Lutheran churches. Meanwhile, it could be said that the overcoming of the Reformation schism is the proximate, rather than ultimate, aim of unitive ecumenism in that it leads to the unity of Eastern and Western churches with one another and among themselves and witnessing together to their shared faith in Jesus Christ. Thirdly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology is supported by the cultural-linguistic theory of doctrine. Lindbeck finds the primary cause of the Reformation schism in the doctrinal differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches, especially, on justification by faith. The problem is that traditional understandings of doctrine, namely, the propositional-cognitivist or the experiential-expressivist approaches to doctrine, cannot overcome the division of ecclesial bodies caused by doctrinal difference. Therefore, as a solution,

Lindbeck proposes the cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine which views doctrine as a rule rather than a truth claim, and then seeks for the reconciliation without doctrinal capitulation. Importantly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology obtains theological legitimacy through his quest for the nature of doctrine.

Fourthly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology seeks an Israel-like church. Lindbeck says that since the second century the notion of the gentile church to Israelhood has been consistently related to the claim to denial of this heritage to the Jews and as a result, so-called supersessionism spreads among gentile Christians. The problem is that this supersessionism is the main cause of anti-Semitism in Western Christianity nations. So, since the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church and other ecclesial bodies have condemned supersessionism. About this, Lindbeck holds that extreme supersessionist positions should be rejected, but communal benefits of the notion of Israel-like church should be examined properly. Lindbeck is careful in quasi-Marcionite tendency of our times, and says that a nonsupersessionist Israel-like ecclesiology is biblically possible and is pragmatically needed for ecumenical benefits. He adds that the notion of Israel-like church would be embodied only under the condition of upheavals difficult to depict but all too easy to predict. Fifthly, it is based on postliberalism. Lindbeck's ecumenical passion was not confined to the search for the visible unity of the church but was extended to the topic of religious relations. Postliberalism is a theological scheme for Lindbeck's concern with interreligious relations. He insists that postliberal perspective is required in order to establish interreligious relations appropriate for our postmodern age. In other words, he infers that unlike theological liberalism which seeks universal foundations of religion, postliberal pattern of thinking which regards highly the uniqueness and particularity of religious traditions is appropriate to postmodern world emphasizing the plurality and the relativity. The core belief of postliberalism is that not only the division of churches, especially due to doctrinal differences, but also conflicts among different religions can be solved by mutual respect for the particularity of each party based on its own community with its communal identity-holding stories.

We come to the following conclusion through the analyses above. Each of the characteristics of Lindbeck's ecclesiology has ecumenical bearings. His concern for

intra-Christian relations and interreligious relations, and his nonsupersessionist notion of Israel-like church are all included in his ecumenical passion. Also, both of the cultural-linguistic theory of doctrine and postliberalism that he proposes are oriented toward ecumenicity, in that it seeks to overcome the schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches and establish religious relations, especially the relation of Christianity with other religions, appropriate for a postmodern age.

## **5.2 A Reformed assessment of Lindbeck's ecclesiology**

### **5.2.1 Reformed ecumenicity**

#### **5.2.1.1 Reformed identity: a classical and contextualizing Reformed theology**

This dissertation tries to make an assessment Lindbeck's Ecclesiology from a Reformed perspective. For this, it is required to explain, first of all, Reformed ecumenicity, for it is considered as the standard of assessment. However, this task presents another preceding task. It is a description about Reformed identity, in other words, the answer to the question of "What is Reformed?" should be presented. However, today there are people who consider negatively the discussion on Reformed identity. Stroup (2003:257-258) introduces three kinds of people. Firstly, there are people who do not consider it important. They believe that Christian identity is more appropriate rather than Reformed identity. Secondly, there are people who think that Reformed identity is not a matter of practical possibility. They think that the Reformed tradition has diversified in history and it has got harder and harder to find the common elements among different voices. Finally, there are people who think that in light of postmodernism, the concept of identity is anachronistic. They think it neither intelligible nor defensible in a postmodern age that denies universals and welcomes pluralism.

Though all the people above give significant remarks about significant remarks, the fact is that representatives from the Reformed tradition who take part in ecumenical dialogues should tell their dialogue partners their own theological identity, that is, who they are as Reformed Christians.

This dissertation tries to propose a classical and contextualizing Reformed theology in relation to Reformed identity.

Firstly, the term *classical* means Calvinism-rooted. Historically the origin of Reformed Church is associated with what Calvinism has been established as a mainstream theology of the Protestant since the Reformation. In this regard, the terms *Reformed theology* and *Calvinism* tend to be used together. Calvinism-rooted Reformed theology means Reformed theology based on core beliefs of Calvinism. Generally, it is said that main ideas of Calvinism include the five points of Calvinism, five Solas of the Reformation, Covenant Theology, and the idea of the sovereignty of God.

Concerning the five points of Calvinism, these are known as the so-called acronym of TULIP. “T” stands for Total Depravity (or Total Inability and Original Sin), which means that humanity is totally depraved due to the Fall by sin. “U” stands for Unconditional Election, which means that God chooses those whom he is pleased to bring to the knowledge of himself, based solely upon his own will. “L” stands for Limited Atonement (or Particular Atonement), which means that Christ died for many people, but not all: specifically, his death was for the invisible church. “I” stands for Irresistible Grace, which means that the elect give response to the inward call of the Holy Spirit and come to Christ in salvation, when the outward call is given through evangelism or preaching of the Word of God. And “P” stands for Perseverance of the Saints (or Once Saved Always Saved), which means that the elect will certainly be glorified at the last day, based on Christ’s fulfillment of the will of the Father in saving all of them.

Five Solas of the Reformation comprise Sola Fide (by faith alone), Sola Scriptura (by Scripture alone), Solus Christus (through Christ alone), Sola Gratia (by grace alone) and Soli Deo Gloria (glory to God alone). Boice (2001:65-149) gives a theological account of each of five Solas as follows. Sola Fide was expressed as justification by faith by the Reformers. It means that justification which is declared by God based on the atonement of Christ comes to sinners by grace alone, through faith alone. For the Reformers, Sola Scriptura was concerned with the Bible’s authority. It claims that the Scripture alone is our truly ultimate authority by which everything is to be judged. Solus Christus reflects the Reformers’ efforts to correct the medieval church’s error to add

human achievements to Christ' work. It affirms that salvation was entirely by Christ and his substitutionary atonement. By the slogan of Sola Gratia, the Reformers mean that we as sinners have no claim upon God. It asserts that apart from God's grace and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that comes from it, no one can be saved. Soli Deo Gloria is a summing up of each of the Solas. It should be declared because all things are from God, and to God.

Among these five Solas, this dissertation considers Sola Scriptura to be the most critical point in assessing Lindbeck's ecclesiology.

By Sola Scriptura, the Reformers means that the supreme standard in all aspects of Christian belief and life is the Scriptura. In other words, the Scriptura has the final authority. So, confessions, creeds, and doctrines of the church have a relative authority to the Scripture. Of course, they have a public and historical authority unlike personal opinions, and what they assert is not easily changed. Nevertheless, we cannot say that they have the supreme and unchangeable authority. Their authority is relativized before the authority of the Scripture. Reformed theologian Bavinck (2003:87) says,

Scripture alone is the norm and rule of faith and life (*norma et regula fidei et vitae*). The confession deserves credence only because and insofar as it agrees with Scripture and, as the fallible work of human hands, remains open to revision and examination by the standard of Scripture. Accordingly, the confession is at most a secondary standard, and even then not of truth but of the doctrine embraced in a particular church (*norma secundaria, non veritatis sed doctrinae in aliqua ecclesia receptae*) and therefore binding for all who wish to live in fellowship with that church. Within the church the confession has authority as "an agreement of fellowship," as the expression of the faith of the church, but it believes and maintains that confession only on the basis of Scripture. All Christian churches are united in the confession that Holy Scripture is the foundation of theology, and the Reformation unanimously recognized it as the only foundation (*principium unicum*).

Bavinck (2003:89) also says,



Calvin in his *Institutes*, Melancthon in the preface of his *Loci*, and all dogmatists assert that clear and complete knowledge of God can only be obtained from Scripture. Virtually every dogmatic begins with the doctrine of Scripture as the sole foundation of theology. The attributes of authority, sufficiency, and perfection, which Protestants in their struggle with Rome attributed to Holy Scripture, demonstrate the same thing.

In brief, Reformed theology based on Sola Scriptura distinguishes Scripture as the bearer of the primary and supreme authority from doctrines or confessions as the bearer of the secondary and relative authority.<sup>115</sup>

In regard to Covenant theology, it is a hermeneutics, a hermeneutics in particular as “a consistent interpretative procedure yielding a consistent understanding of Scripture” which leads to confirming “the propriety of the procedure itself” (Packer 2010:27-28). Packer (2010:31-39) says that Covenant theology as hermeneutics has three implications: Firstly, a proper understanding of the gospel of God requires a covenantal framework of seeing it; Secondly, a proper understanding of the Word of God requires a covenantal framework of seeing it; thirdly, a proper understanding of the reality of God requires a covenantal framework of seeing it. Packer (2010:39-42) argues that the Scripture “forces” covenant theology on all who claim it to be God’s witness to God’s redemptive work, and that the force is possible in four ways: by the story of the Scripture, by the place of Jesus Christ in the Scriptural covenant story, by the specific parallel between Christ and Adam based on Romans 5:12-18 and in 1 Corinthians 15:21-28, 45-49, and by the explicit declaration of the covenant of redemption, mainly expressed in the Gospel of John. Covenant theology generally views the biblical history of mankind, from God’s Creation of the world to the fall of the mankind to the redemption of Christ to the consummation of the salvation, from the

---

<sup>115</sup> In relation to this, McGrath (1996a:114) says that the sola Scriptura principle of the Reformation has to be regarded as the claim to “the primacy of the foundational scriptural narrative over any framework of conceptualities which it may generate”, in that the Reformation was of great significance in its re-examining work of the “medieval catholic framework of conceptualities by the criteria of their generative narrative.” He also interprets another principle of the Reformation, that is, *ecclesia reformata, ecclesia semper reformanda* as “an affirmation of the need continually to correlate the generating narrative and the resulting concepts” (McGrath 1996a:114).

perspective of three overarching theological covenants: the covenants of redemption, of works, and of grace.<sup>116</sup> Regarding the relationship between Israel and the Church, Covenant theology objects supersessionism or replacement theology, and thus it is distinguished from dispensationalism. It does not claim that God has abandoned his promises to Israel, but believe in the fulfillment of the promises to Israel in Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

About the sovereignty of God, Calvinism teaches that God is sovereign and rules with absolute control over all creation, especially over the salvation and individual human beings. Pink (2008:15-21) says that the expression of the sovereignty of God has some meanings: the kingship of God, God's right to govern the universe, which he has made for his own glory, just as he pleases, his being sovereignty in all his attributes, such as his mercy, his love, his grace and his power, and in the delegation of them to others. Calvinists affirm that God's sovereignty is not just a truth to be believed in their mind; It is a truth by which they should live day by day and which urges them to achieve the purpose of God's kingdom.<sup>117</sup>

Secondly, the term *contextualizing* refers to the effort to make the text relevant to the context by applying it to every dimension of and to all the relationships in the context, without changing the message of the text.<sup>118</sup> This dissertation claims that Reformed theology should be a contextualizing theology which interprets, communicates, and applies Calvinist convictions within a particular cultural context. To do this, Reformed theologians should precisely perceive the various challenges of given situations, and respond to them according to the principles of Reformed heritage. Alston and Welker

---

<sup>116</sup> Horton (2006:83) prefers the term *covenant of creation* to the term *covenant of works* because the latter remains very controversial in contemporary Reformed theology.

<sup>117</sup> Kuyper's concept of Calvinism as a life-system in his work *Lectures on Calvinism* (1931), can be suggested as an example of Calvinists' pursuit of the kingdom of God with the conviction of the sovereignty of God. Kuyper (1931:15-17) says that "[t]he domain of Calvinism is indeed far broader than the narrow confessional interpretation would lead us to suppose" and that "Calvinism made its appearance, not merely to create a different Church-form, but an entirely different form for human life, to furnish human society with a different method of existence, and to populate the world of the human heart with different ideals and conceptions."

<sup>118</sup> This follows Engle's definition of contextualization, an Evangelicalism-based one. There are different definitions of contextualization depending on different theological positions, for example, Liberalism-based, Neoliberalism-based or Neoorthodoxy-based one. For details, see Engle (1983:88-91).

(2003:x) regards a continuous search for Reformed identity as a characteristic of Reformed theology. According to them, this search takes place in the setting of the Word of God and the challenges of the world, and thus it is related to a motto of Reformed theology, *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda* (the Reformed church [must] always be reformed). Alston and Welker (2003:x) says,

This search serves the ever richer edification of Christian faith and the life of the Christian church as it strives for a more encompassing and intelligible knowledge of God and of God's intentions for the world. This search, however, also serves human societies and cultures, which are tempted to settle for reductionistic or ideological conceptions of certainty and truth.

For Alston and Welker (2003:x-xi), the idea of a continuous search for Reformed identity refers to Reformed Christians' life "in a perpetual state of trust on the one hand, and critical reflection on the other hand" with a continuous test of customs and convictions of Reformed heritage "on the way from individual and communal certainties to the fuller disclosure of truth." In this respect, they regard Reformed theology as a theology for "a truth-seeking community," which invites and challenges other people or institutions to live as "truth-seeking communities rather than communities within which various certainties are espoused by various interest groups" (Alston and Welker 2003:xi). Alston and Welker (2003:xi) consider Reformed Christians today to live in a context of "difficult and highly sensitive constellations," which means that they live in a setting of inner pluralism based on shared, or common, convictions of Reformed heritage. On this, they give an account as follows (Alston and Welker 2003:xi). Reformed people share cultures, yet live in different cultures and customs. They share theological sources, yet prefer different theological sources. They emphasize the same dogmatic themes, yet stress different dogmatic themes. They use similar thought patterns, yet use different thought patterns. They share ethical concerns, yet hold different, even conflicting ethical concerns. Alston and Welker (2003:xii) argue that this inner pluralism of Reformed Christians is quite distinct from "a vague plurality, or even a relativistic or individualistic constellation."

In brief, Alston and Welker (2003:xii) claim that Reformed theology must balance “shared convictions and fruitful difference.” For, they believe, a strong commonality of Reformed theology, or the identity of Reformed theology, does not only come from its basic convictions but also from its high contextual sensitivity which is gained only in a pluralistic context accompanying a rapid cultural transformation (Alston and Welker 2003:xii)

Alston and Welker may be assessed to seek to overcome a weakness of traditional Reformed theology: it is a mere intellectual work of seeking understanding or intelligibility of Reformed convictions, and of persuading those who hear them proclaimed. They focus on the unfinished, ongoing aspect of Reformed theology. They cherish Reformed heritage, but they do not want themselves to be tied to the past. They demand that Reformed theology today should lead itself to continuous contextualization, based on its faith heritage. In this regard, their view of Reformed theology might be said to be similar to this dissertation’s understanding of Reformed theology as a classical and contextualizing theology.

An example of the concept of classical and contextualizing Reformed theology is Kim’s essay *The Identity of Reformed theology in the Twenty-First Century* (2003). In this essay, Kim gives a response to the spiritual challenge of the twenty-first century, based on the principles of Reformed heritage. Kim summarizes the spiritual challenges in the twenty-first century into five ones: postmodernism, religious pluralism, New Age movement, high technological secularism and its by-products, and cyber-culture. This dissertation deals with postmodernism among these five challenges.<sup>119</sup> Kim explains the historical significance of postmodernism, a deconstructive postmodernism in particular, describes its challenges against Christianity, and gives a Reformed response to them, based on the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Postmodernism is a new

---

<sup>119</sup> Our purpose is not to examine each of the spiritual challenges in the twenty-first century that Kim proposed, but to examine the identity of Reformed theology, that is, Reformed theology as a contextualizing theology through Kim’s theological work. The rest of spiritual challenges can be summarized as follows: the reaffirmation of *Solus Christus: The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ* in the context of religious pluralism, the reapplication of *The Human as Image of God and Total Depravity* to the context of New age movement, the rehabilitation of *Reformed Spirituality* in the context of high technological secularism and its by-products, and the reassertion of *Cultural Transformation: Christ, the Transformer of Culture* in the context of cyber-culture (Kim 2003:4-14).

movement of reason and science that tries to overcome the crisis brought about by modernism. Modernism sought to destroy Christian beliefs in the revelation of God and the authority of Scripture, based on a Cartesian epistemology that views scientific rationality as the standard for all knowledge. Postmodernism, by contrast, pointing out the problems brought about by modern rationality, such as the alienation of human beings and ecological pollution, sought to break down “the rationalist castle of science and reason, and the idol of scientific objectivism and rationalism” (Kim 2003:4). Anti-foundational tendency of postmodernism leads to deconstructive thought which demythologizes Christianity. Postmodernists have accused modernism of its homogenizing and suppressing character, but the same criticism now applies to Christianity because of its claim to the absolute, God. However, when Reformed Christians insist on the existence of the absolute, it does not have any ideological implication; It is, rather, a matter of choice between life and death, good and evil, love and hate, etc. Kim (2003:9) says,

The search for truth and for God is an issue that will never be given up. Self-justified authority and artificial sacred books should be criticized and examined again. When authority and sacred books as a whole are rejected, however, human thought and action loses its way and falls into nihilism.

Deconstructive postmodernism, in particular, denies “the reality of truth and the universality of morals and values” and as a result, moves to “a methodological and moral relativism that permits everything” (Kim 2003:4). Defining deconstructive postmodernism as a secular ideology, Kim (2003:4-9) argues that Reformed Christians have to affirm that “there is a universal truth that humanity should and could pursue,” despite their acknowledgment of the diversity of thought pattern, culture, and customs. Contrary to situationists’ relativistic insistence that truth, moral, value, and meaning should be developed in accordance with human thought, they have to be interpreted from the perspective of God’s creation and His purpose (Kim 2003:9). Kim (2003:9) says,

Values and ethics should be dynamically illumined by the paradoxical relation between the infinite request of God and the human situation in which value

judgments and ethical acts are required. A deconstructive postmodernism falls into an anarchistic situation vis-à-vis values and knowledge when it denies all authority, especially that of the sacred books.

Kim (2003:9) gives a response to the challenge of destructive postmodernism, based on a principle of Reformed heritage, the *Sola Scriptura*. He suggests that Reformed theology should preserve its identity in a postmodern context by reaffirming the principle of *Sola Scriptura*: the Scripture as the Word of God. It means that Reformed theology has to listen to the living voice of God rather than conceal the revelatory truth by using higher criticism of the Bible. In other words, Reformed theologians must have “biblically realistic thinking that does not evaluate critically but instead accommodates what the [S]cripture is saying” (Kim 2003:9-10).

Gadamer suggests that the hermeneutics of effective history, rather than methodological thinking, will uncover the meaning of texts. The true task of biblical hermeneutics consists in listening to the voice of God who is speaking through the biblical text (Kim 2003:9)

Kim (2003:10) adds that Reformed theologians who are listening to the Word of God can interpret it in diverse ways.

In brief, Kim suggests that Reformed theology should and could creatively respond to postmodern challenges of relativizing and dissolving truth and values, based on a Reformed heritage: the *Scriptura* as the Word of God. He is, in a sense, doing a contextualizing Reformed theology for the twenty-first century.

### **5.2.1.2 A classical and contextualizing Reformed ecumenicity**

In the above discussion, we have examined the identity of Reformed theology, namely a view of Reformed theology as a classical and contextualizing theology. Now we will study ecumenicity of Reformed theology that corresponds to this identity of Reformed

theology. In other words, we will examine both classical and contextualizing aspects of Reformed theology.

#### **5.2.1.2.1 A classical aspect**

As in the above discussion about Reformed Identity, in the discussion about Reformed ecumenicity, the term *classical* refers to Calvinism-rooted – in a broader sense, Reformed convictions-rooted.

This dissertation attempts to derive a Classical view of Reformed Ecumenicity from Calvin's notions of the visible church and the invisible church.

Calvin introduces two perspectives on the church in the Scripture in his work *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1543). One perspective is the church as the invisible church. It understands the church as “that which is actually in God's presence, into which no persons are received but those who are children of God by grace of adoption and true members of Christ by sanctification of the Holy Spirit” (Calvin 1960:1021). Calvin (1960:1022) says that the invisible church is invisible to men, that is, it is “visible to the eyes of God alone.” The invisible church includes not only the present saints on earth, but also all the elects of God. The other one is the church as the visible church. It considers the church as “the whole multitude of men spread over the earth who profess to worship one God and Christ” (Calvin 1960:1021). The visible church regards highly the practices of the church, for example, exercising baptism, partaking in the Lord's Supper, keeping unity in true doctrine and love, preaching the Word of God, etc. This visible church has a problem. It is mingled with many hypocrites who are just called Christians, without having real knowledge of Christ. Nevertheless, however, we should honor and keep communion with the visible church, for it is the mother of believers (Calvin 1960:1022).

Calvin's notion of the visible church can be defined as follows. Firstly, the visible church is distinguishable from the invisible church. Secondly, it professes the true religion. Thirdly, it emphasizes the practices of the church, namely the ministry instituted by Christ. Fourthly, it comprehends not only a true and lawful church but also

a corrupted church which is tolerated for a time. Fifthly, nevertheless, it should be honored by and be in continuous communion with the children of God.

The visible church is connected with Calvin's another idea. It is the distinction between the true and lawful church, and the false and corrupt church. Calvin (1960:1052) mentions that "the true and lawful constitution of the church, required in the communion not only of the sacraments (which are the signs of profession) but also especially of doctrine." By the false and corrupt church, he means the papists upon whom he categorically refuses to bestow the title of church (Calvin 1960b:1052). He opposes the papacy, and compares a Roman pontiff who is "the leader and standard bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom" to Antichrist who sits in the temple of God, foretold by Daniel [Dan. 9:27] and Paul [2 Thess. 2:4]. Nevertheless, however, he acknowledges vestiges of the church under the papacy. He holds that the papists, or the papal church, must be repudiated because of its corruption, but does not deny the existence of churches among them. For in those churches, baptism as a witness to God's inviolable covenant is practiced, and by God's own providence other vestiges remain, that they (those churches) might not be utterly destroyed (Calvin 1960:1052). Calvin (1960:1052) says,

And just as often happens when buildings are pulled down the foundations and ruins remain, so he did not allow his church either to be destroyed to the very foundations by Antichrist or to be leveled to the ground, even though to punish the ungratefulness of men who had despised his word he let it undergo frightful shaking and shattering, but even after this very destruction willed that a half-demolished building remain.

The churches under the tyranny of Antichrist have been easily exposed to impurity and corruption by his poisoned drinks, that is, his evil and deadly teachings of the Bible. Calvin (1960:1053) depicts them as this: "In them Christ lies hidden, half buried, the gospel overthrown, piety scattered, the worship of God nearly wiped out. In them, briefly, everything is so confused that there we see the face of Babylon rather than that of the Holy City of God." He regards them as an equivalent in New Testament age to both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom



of Judah, although they possibly are even worse than those two Kingdoms in certain areas (Calvin 1960:1049).

Calvin (1960:1053) considers the churches under Antichrist's domination to be churches as long as in them God preserves a remnant of his people and they keep some marks of the church. Calvin thinks that the Roman Catholic Church which is far from the papal church is one of those churches. For Calvin, in spite of its moral faults, the Roman Catholic Church is acknowledged as a part of the visible church. Calvin (1960:1053), however, points out that those marks have tended to disappear in the Roman Catholic Church, that is, every one of its congregations has lacked in the true and lawful form of the church.

Calvin's distinction between the true and lawful churches, and the false and corrupt churches shows two tasks of the visible church: to seek the truth and to seek the unity. Concerning the former, Calvin proposes the criteria to distinguish the true church from the false church. It is whether the ministry of the Word and sacraments is carried out with reverence (Calvin 1960:1041). For Calvin, this ministry is the matter of life and death of the church (Calvin 1960:1041). Calvin (1960:1041), citing Paul's words [Eph. 2:20], says that "the church is founded upon the teaching of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself the chief cornerstone."

The visible church's task of seeking the truth means that it should be built on the certainty of faith. The Reformers in Calvin's age resist against the oppressive authority of the Roman Catholic Church. But in the background of this resistance is their starting point in faith, which is the Word of God. They remained bound to God's Word heard through Old Testament and New Testament. They believed the unshakable authority of the Word. In this regard, Bavinck (1980:8) says,

No one felt the need for an inquiry into the final ground of faith, into the deepest foundations of certainty. People were convinced they possessed the truth, and no one questioned the writings on which the faith was grounded. In

times of vital religious life you don't doubtingly examine the foundations of your hope. You speak as one having authority and not like the Pharisees.<sup>120</sup>

Concerning the visible church's task of seeking the unity, it is not easy for the empirical church to show the evidence of the unity. Calvin is not simply satisfied with describing the unity of the invisible church. He considers the unity of Christians as the task of corresponding to the faithful. It is an essential task of the visible church. For example, Calvin purveys the Presbyterian synodical system. Also, as seen above, he acknowledges the Roman Catholic Church as a part of the visible church in spite of its moral faults, for in it sacraments are carried out. That the Roman Catholic Church is "a half-demolished building" will not be able to hinder God's faithfulness (1960:1052). He also says that as long as the preaching of the Word and sacraments are carried out wholly and uncorrupted, trivial errors or slight faults of the churches ought to be pardoned (Calvin 1960:1041).

So far, we have looked at the visible church and its two tasks. These tasks should be reflected on Reformed ecumenicity based on Calvinism. In other words, Reformed ecumenicity should have both the truth-seeking aspect and the unity-seeking aspect. In connection with the former, Reformed ecumenicity should be based on the biblical truth. As the visible church becomes the true church on the condition of proclaiming the Word of God and carrying out the sacraments, Reformed ecumenicity can become the true ecumenicity by being built on the biblical truth and engaging in right sacraments. Regarding the latter, Reformed Christians should seek the unity of the church. They should realize the imperfectness and weakness of the visible church and participate in the practice of the genuine oneness of the church.

---

<sup>120</sup> According to Bavinck (1980:8), the certainty of faith of Reformation ages has been continuing until the middle of the eighteenth century. A change starting with the Enlightenment has spread into main areas of Western Christianity. The change is to doubt of and emancipate from everything sacred of the past. As a result, the authority of the Bible is placed under critical reason's inquiry into the ground of all authority, which results in the loss of certainty.

### **5.2.1.2.2 A contextualizing aspect**

Reformed theology should be faithful to its identity, and also, recognize precisely various challenges of given situation, and respond to them according to the principles of Reformed heritage.

In regard to Reformed ecumenicity, the situations where Reformed theology today is placed can be summarized into two aspects: postmodernism and religious pluralism.

Concerning postmodernism, it can be understood from both chronological and ideological viewpoints. It chronologically refers to a historical period subsequent to the age of modernism, but it ideologically seeks to overcome modernist thoughts which were influenced by the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationality and foundationalism (Grenz 1996:5). Kim (2003:15) summarizes the features of postmodernism into four points. Firstly, postmodernism uses the multidimensional, pluralistic way of thinking to analyze various areas of our society such as politics, economy, and culture. For our times gradually go towards 'a multi-confessional, ecumenical world community' (Kim 2003:15). Secondly, the postmodernists seek for a paradigm change of values. They emphasize ethical responsibility. For example, the change is required "from a science divorced from ethics into an ethically responsible science" (Kim 2003:15). The goal of technology is not to rule over humankind but to serve it. For postliberals, the ethics of responsibility does not just mean "a human-centered ethics" but "an ecotopian ethics" (Kim 2003:15). Postmodern thinking emphasizes new values such as "imagination, sensibility, emotionality, warmth, tenderness, and humanity" which were disregarded in the modern age (Kim 2003:15). Thirdly, postmodernism is a holistic way of thinking. The postmodernists consider multidimensional aspects of thinking which include rational, emotional, and sensitive ones, and seek balance among them. Fourthly, postmodern ethics seeks social justice through liberation. The postmodernists maintain solidarity with socially oppressed groups. They attempt to liberate these groups from unjust social systems.

Reformed theology situated in a postmodern context, therefore, needs to use affirmative features of postmodernism to oppose the negative aspects of modernist thinking. Reformed Christians can employ a postmodern holistic way of thinking to

avoid a modernist one-sided emphasis on universal rationality. They can consider together various human factors and even natural environment. Kim (2003:15) argues that insofar as the term *postmodern* means “a critique of the modern,” Reformed postmodern theology can be against modern scientific, positivistic, and metaphysical thinking.” To the extent that the term *pluralism* does not refer to relative truth, Reformed theology can use the postmodernist concept of pluralism to prevent our society from being a closed one and further cause religion to have a public tendency (Kim 2003:15).

Reformed ecumenicity is based on a Reformed belief that “the Word of God proclaims not only salvific truth but also universal truth and value” (Kim 2003:15). This belief causes Reformed theology to creatively respond to postmodernism. In other words, Reformed Christians can hold that they live in a plural world, but they live with the claim of universal truth which is based on the biblical teachings, not on modern philosophy.

Concerning religious pluralism, Kim (2003:15) argues that Reformed theology can respond to it by asserting “a paradoxical unity of exclusivism and inclusivism.” Kim (2003:15) says that it is on the basis of the general revelation that Reformed theology engages in interreligious dialogues. Reformed theology may take an open-minded view of other religions and their truth claims and may even learn lessons from them. Within ecumenical dialogues, Reformed theology has an exclusive attitude: It claims to the uniqueness of and completeness in Christ and asserts that the only way to salvation is Jesus Christ. However, this exclusive attitude is accompanied by an inclusivistic position toward other religions, since they also bear witness to the general revelation of God. However, the general revelation is regarded as insufficient because it is distorted and altered by the corruption of human being (Berkhof 2003:6).<sup>121</sup> This insufficiency implies that other religions need to “be illumined and complemented by the gospel of Christ.” For Christ is “the singular and unique self-revelation of God, the Word of God in person,” and “the unique redeemer for the salvation of humans and for the knowledge of the true God” (Olson 2013:313; Kim 2003:16). This transforming

---

<sup>121</sup> Berkhof (2003:6) says that Roman Catholics and Protestants insist on the insufficiency of the general revelation while Pelagians, Deists, and Rationalists do not.

thinking is distinguished from the exclusivist position of the dialectical theology which refuses the idea of the existence of the general revelation of God in other religions. Kim (2003:16) calls this transforming view “the inclusive transforming position.” This position respects the relative usefulness and values of other religions despite their incapability of bringing salvation. The inclusive transforming position is also different from the continuationalist position which holds a universalistic view of salvation. In Kim’s view, the continuationists confuse “the creation-related, transcendental revelation given in human consciousness” with “the historical, particular revelation of salvation given in the scriptures and Jesus Christ” (Kim 2003:16).

In brief, the inclusive transforming position Kim proposes seeks Reformed ecumenicity by acknowledging other religions as bearers of the general revelation of God and by finally witnessing to them about Christ as God’s unique revelation of salvation.

Kim’s claim to an inclusive transforming thinking may be assessed to be a Reformed attempt to seek a humble and true ecumenicity in postmodern ecumenical settings. The term *humble* means that Reformed theology should involve in ecumenical dialogues with respect for other religions, based on the belief in the existence of God’s general revelation in them. The term *true* means that Reformed theology should ultimately testify to other religions about Jesus Christ, based on the conviction that he is God’s unique revelation of salvation.

Finally, concerning the contextualizing aspect of Reformed ecumenicity, Reformed tradition of cherishing cultural diversity has to be maintained. Reformed tradition from its origins had an international and culturally-diverse character.<sup>122</sup> Various vernacular languages were used in worship and theological works to promote lay people’s participation. A common Reformed confession was not adopted; the historic Apostles’ Creed and Nicene Creed only were commonly used. Customarily, each church in the Reformed family makes its own confession in its own context and in its special historical situation. Reformed churches proclaimed their common faith in Jesus Christ,

---

<sup>122</sup> Douglass considers unity in diversity to be a characteristic of the Reformed tradition. (viewed 13 August 2017 from <http://www.religion-online.org/article/a-reformed-perspective-on-the-ecumenical-movement>).

but also desired for God's reign over the world through the transformation of various spheres of life by Christ's gospel. In short, Reformed theology focused on the diversity of situations as well as the common faith.

Douglass (2004:306) offers six lenses through which we can see Calvin in an ecumenical context. Firstly, Calvin's catholic understanding of the church, together with his conviction that the true church can be found under various forms of church order. Secondly, his struggle against the superstitions and the idols. Thirdly, his engagement with some ecclesial bodies of other traditions. Fourthly, the multinational and multicultural Geneva where he stayed for pastoral ministry. Fifthly, his refugee experience and his ministry to the Calvinist diaspora and to religious refugees. Sixthly, his emphasis on Christian stewardship and the love of one's neighbor, marked by keeping God's commandment of justice. Douglass (2004:306) says that each of these six elements influenced not only Calvin's ministry but also its subsequent Reformed tradition, especially its ecumenical involvement.

Among these elements, the fourth and the fifth ones are related to the diversity of Reformed ecumenicity. It means that cultural diversity was the matter of importance in Calvin's and the Reformers' ecumenical context.

Therefore, Reformed theology with its Calvinist heritage should cherish the cultural diversity in its ecumenical context.

In addition, the cultural diversity means that Reformed churches should affirm and practice their convictions of faith in diverse cultures and various situations. It also means that Reformed theology should reaffirm its cultural mandate: Christ as the Lord of culture. Reformed churches need to make use of culture as "a great opportunity to propagate the gospel to the end of the world" (Kim 2003:19).

## 5.2.2 A Reformed evaluation of Lindbeck's ecclesiology

### 5.2.2.1 Concerning a unitive ecumenicity

To begin with, we need to examine the meaning of the term *visible* in Lindbeck's theology. He aims at the visible unity of the church. His criticism of denominationalism that he experienced in his childhood came basically from his recognition that it did not seek the visible unity. By visible Lindbeck refers to being institutional. In this respect, his understanding of the term *visible* is different from Calvin's. For Calvin, the term *visible* is in contrast with the term *invisible*. By invisible he refers to the completeness and eternalness of the church. For him, *visible*, in turn, means the incompleteness and weakness of the church. In brief, Lindbeck's notion of *visible* refers to institutional churches, while Calvin's means incomplete and weak churches.

Unlike Lindbeck, Reformed theology distinguishes the church as organism from the church as institution or organization. This distinction applies only to the visible church – in Calvin's sense (Berkhof 2003:114). The church as institution or organization means that the church becomes visible in the church offices, in the practice of the Word of God and the sacraments, and in forms of church government. Even if these institutional or organizational elements were absent, the church would still remain the visible church. For the church is visible "as an organism, as a communion of believers, in their communal life and profession, and in their joint opposition to the world" (Berkhof 2003:114). Reformed theology thus ultimately aims at the unity of the church as organism. In this respect, it is distinguished from Lindbeck's ecclesiology which seeks the institutional unity of the church.

Then, we need to look at convergence ecumenism which is essential to the understanding of a unitive ecumenicity. One of the characteristics of convergence ecumenism is to interpret the Reformation as a reform movement within Roman Catholic Church. Convergence ecumenists hold that Roman Catholic Church should regain their lost "catholic heritage the Reformers retained" to reach "the Catholic wholeness" (Lindbeck 2004:396). According to Lindbeck (2004:397), the Augsburg Confession, the most authoritative confession of Lutheran churches, argues that what the Reformers believed is not in conflict with the heritage of the Roman Catholic

Church insofar as it can be supported by the Fathers. So, it is not legitimately possible to break communion between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches following the Augsburg Confession. Given, especially, the freedom to preach the Word and celebrate the proper sacraments, the reunion between them cannot be hindered (Lindbeck 2004:397).

From what seen above, we have some points to mention about convergence ecumenicity. Firstly, in explaining it, Lindbeck relies ultimately on the authority of the Augsburg Confession and the Fathers. Unlike him, Reformed theology counts ultimately on the authority of the Scripture. Of course, it appreciates highly magisterial confessions of the church and the teachings of the Fathers. It, however, places the supreme authority on the Scripture, not those confessions and teachings. It implies that the standard according to which the ecclesial unity must be assessed is not any of ecclesiastical confessions but the Scripture.

Likewise, Lindbeck relies on the authority of the Second Vatican Council in assessing the Joint. He says,

Yet it [the Joint], like the other ecumenical advances we have mentioned, is a disappointment when viewed from the mountaintop that was Vatican II (Lindbeck 2004:400).

This means that he identifies the Second Vatican Council as the standard of ecclesial unity. In this respect, Lindbeck is distinct from Reformed theology which considers the Scripture as the standard.

Secondly, convergence ecumenism seeks reconciliation without capitulation. Contrary to it, Reformed ecumenicity might claim to mutual correction of the participants in ecumenical dialogues, based on the teachings of the Bible. For Reformed ecumenicity is the truth-seeking one. For Reformed theology, genuine ecumenicity must be established on the basis of the truth. So, Reformed churches involving in ecumenical dialogues can carry out mutual correction by the truth on the basis of love. In relation to this, Moon (2012:119-156) says that Calvin's ecclesiology is a Christological one 'based on the principle of Sola Scriptura of the Reformation': Calvin considers the



church as the Lord's body in which brotherly love 'based on the truth' is practiced. In brief, Reformed ecumenism is distinguishable from convergence ecumenism in that it aims at the unity in truth.

Thirdly, Lindbeck who seeks convergence ecumenicity, opposes denominational unity. In a Reformed view, however, the form of ecclesial unity – whether it is denominational ecumenism<sup>123</sup> or nondenominational ecumenism – does not matter, because what is the most important to Reformed theology is the foundation of ecclesial unity, not its form. In this regard, it cannot always accept Lindbeck's objection to antidenominationalism.

Finally, a unitive ecumenicity Lindbeck seeks leaves two things to be desired. Firstly, it does not point out that the Reformation schism is not only a historical and empirical event but also the result of sin. Secondly, it does not consider the sinful nature of the participants in ecumenical movements.

### **5.2.2.2 Concerning ecclesiology as a diachronic approach to the unity of the church**

We need to examine Lindbeck's diachronic approach to the unity of the church. His ecclesiology is a diachronic one in that it traces ecclesial division today back to the Reformation schism in the sixteenth-century, and, in this sense, focuses on the continuity between the past and the present.

---

<sup>123</sup> A theological view supporting denominationalism claims that despite negative assessment that it demotivates missions, it is useful for churches in the following several points, in the present situation where churches exist in a sinful world. Firstly, it serves as preserving the truth. Secondly, to a not inconsiderable extent, it gets rid of negative – in the sense that it accompanies evils – bureaucracy and hierarchy that one large united ecclesial body has. Thirdly, smaller denominations can contribute to participating in both mission and churches' supporting much more than bigger ones. Supporters of denominationalism oppose the urge to merge, that is, the rush for denominational union or the urge to participate in dialogues from the perspective of a possible merge. Instead, they emphasize the following three points regarding the unity of the churches: spiritual unity as evidence of faith, inter-encouragement among Christians undergoing suffering and persecution, inter-caution for prevention of errors spreading, based on not a desire to criticize but the desire to direct one another in the truth (viewed 30 July 2017 from [http://standardbearer.rfpa.org/index.php?q=node/44107\\_7/30/2017](http://standardbearer.rfpa.org/index.php?q=node/44107_7/30/2017)).

Regarding his diachronic approach, there are some points to be mentioned. Firstly, Lindbeck has a positive attitude toward 'return to Rome,' with his recognition that the Reformation was a reform within the Roman Catholic Church. This means that he supports for Roman Catholic Church-centred unity of mainstream churches in church history, based on convergence.

Contrary to Lindbeck, Reformed theology understands the Reformation as a historical event which resisted to the Roman Catholic Church, the papal Church in particular, as an institution, seeking to rebuild the churches on the basis of the teachings of the Bible. This understanding is reflected in a motto of the Reformation: *Ecclesia semper reformanda est* (the church must always be reformed). The Reformers might consider the Reformation as a reform against the institution, based on the teachings of the Bible, while Lindbeck understands it as a reform within an institution. For example, Calvin fought against the Roman Catholic Church, the papal Church in particular, as a corrupt institutional church.

The Reformers distinguished 'the triumphant church in heaven' from 'the militant church on earth'. The militant church "is called unto and is actually engaged in a holy war" and "must carry on an incessant warfare against the hostile world in every form in which it reveals itself, and against the spiritual powers of darkness" (Berkhof 2003:114). The triumphant church, on the other hand, is the church, in which "the sword is exchanged for the palm of victory, the battle cries are turned into songs of triumph, and the cross is replaced by the crown" (Berkhof 2003:114). Therefore, Reformed church as a militant church on earth should fight against sin according to the teachings of the Bible. And this fight should include the resistance against the false and corrupt church.

Secondly, in Lindbeck's ecumenicity, a diachronic approach is more emphasized than a synchronic one. Although focusing on a diachronic approach to ecclesial unity, Lindbeck is not absolutely far from a synchronic approach. Actually, when encountering the challenges of wider ecumenism that centers on interreligious relations, he responded to them by emphasizing postliberal ecumenicity of contemporary religious traditions. In regard to intra-Christian relations, however, his

synchronic approach has its limit. In other words, he mainly focused on overcoming a historical division, the Reformation schism, through a diachronic approach.

Thirdly, Lindbeck's focus on a diachronic approach is related to his antipathy to denominationalism. He is very negative to contemporary denominational ecumenism. It might result from his experience in the childhood or his passion for unitive ecumenism. The problem is that his antipathy to denominationalism might be in conflict with the Reformed notion of the visible church. In other words, it might be in conflict with the Reformed claim to the universal existence on earth of the visible church and its outward appearance. The visible church appears through not only ecclesial practices like preaching the Word of God and celebrating sacraments, but also pastors, elders, the congregation, church buildings, 'denominations,' etc. Whether they support denominationalism or not, the Reformers can acknowledge the existence of denominations, insofar as those denominations accept the authority of the Scripture and follow the teachings of the Bible. In brief, in a Reformed view, it can be said that Lindbeck's antipathy to denominational ecumenism is too excessive.

### **5.2.2.3 Concerning ecclesiology seeking theological legitimacy**

In order to theologically legitimize unitive ecumenism, Lindbeck criticizes traditional theories of doctrine, the propositional-cognitivist and the experiential-expressivist ones, and at the same time proposes as an alternative the cultural-linguistic one. In other words, he assesses that the cultural-linguistic theory can solve the ecclesial division caused by doctrinal difference, while those traditional theories cannot .

Most of all, we need to examine, in terms of systematic theology, the significance of Lindbeck's pursuit of theological legitimacy. From a Reformed perspective, his pursuit implies that he reevaluates traditional views of doctrine in order to justify his own ecumenical position. In other words, he tries to revise the introductory section of systematic theology books to defend his ecclesiology. Systematic theology has a

distinctive characteristic: particular doctrines are mutually connected in its system.<sup>124</sup> For example, Calvin's ecclesiology and Christology are mutually connected. Another distinctive characteristic of systematic theology is that each doctrine is built upon the subjects in the introductory section of systematic theology books, such as the theory of doctrine, the concept of revelation, the principles of religion, the source of faith, and the attributes of Scripture. For example, Bavinck, in his work *Reformed Dogmatics* (2003), first deals with Prolegomena: Introduction to systematic theology, and then discusses six particular doctrines, that is, *the Triune God and Creation, Humanity and Sin, Christ the Redeemer, the Holy Spirit and Salvation in Christ, the Spirit Creates a New Community, and the Spirit Makes All Things New*. Considering such characteristics of systematic theology, Lindbeck's pursuit of theological legitimacy might be assessed as a bold and challenging one.

Questions arise about whether his criticism of traditional theories of doctrine is justifiable, and whether his proposal of a new theory of doctrine can be theologically legitimized. Regarding his criticism, this dissertation will focus on one of two traditional doctrinal positions, the propositional-cognitivist one. For the essential convictions of Reformed theology have mainly been expressed in forms of propositional statement.<sup>125</sup>

By the propositional-cognitivist approach to doctrine Lindbeck (1984:16) means that doctrines function as "informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities." Historically, the propositional-cognitivist model has been frequently used by traditional orthodoxies, and even by heterodoxies, and looks like modern Anglo-American analytic philosophy's view of religion with its focus on the cognitive or informative aspects of religious utterances. Lindbeck (1984:16-17) assess that the propositional-cognitivist approach cannot carry out doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation, saying "[d]octrinal reconciliation without capitulation is impossible because there is no

---

<sup>124</sup> Such a systematic characteristic is related to Berkhof's "the synthetical method" necessary for "the desired unity in Dogmatics." The synthetical method emphasizes the systematic characteristic of the system and the logical order in which the various doctrines arise in thoughts. Berkhof identifies the starting point of the logical order as the doctrine of God (Berkhof 1996:74-75).

<sup>125</sup> The experiential-expressivist approach to doctrine has historically been connected with theological liberalism rather than Reformed theology.

significant sense in which the meaning of a doctrine can change while remaining the same.” In this respect, Placher (1997:347) says that the propositionalists cannot show “cases where participants in ecumenical conversations find that their communities can now agree on a point where they formerly disagreed, without either side admitting to having changed its position.” Lindbeck’s criticism of the propositional-cognitivist approach is meaningful in some aspects. Firstly, it has provoked a debate over the nature of doctrine, which has traditionally been in silence, but is now lighted up because of the rise of ecumenical movements in the twentieth century (McGrath 1990:14). Secondly, it can properly apply to the neo-scholastic view on revelation, which says that supernatural revelation conveys conceptual information to human receivers in forms of propositional statement (McGrath 1990:20).

Lindbeck’s criticism of the propositional-cognitivist approach, however, has a problem. What Lindbeck is criticizing is not the propositional-cognitivist approach, but a cognitive perspective that looks similar to it, which is called a crude realist approach to propositional statements or a crude correspondence theory of truth (McGrath 1990:18). In this respect, McGrath (1990:18) assesses that Lindbeck’s criticism of the propositional-cognitivist approach is unjust, based on his wrong prejudice, saying,

It would be absurd to suggest that words can adequately capture experience. Cognitive theories of doctrine, however, suggest that words are on the borderlands of such experience, intimating and signposting the reality which they cannot capture ... To apply pejorative epithets such as ‘intellectualist’ or ‘literalist’ to the ‘cognitive-propositionalist’ approach to doctrine is to fail to appreciate the power of words to evoke experience, to point beyond themselves to something inexpressible, to an experience which their author wishes to share with his or her readers. It is also, of course, to fail to do justice to the many levels at which cognitive or propositional statements operate.

McGrath (1990:18) also says,

It must be stressed that such a crude correspondence theory of truth is neither a necessary consequence nor precondition of cognitive approaches to doctrine.

In brief, Lindbeck fails to distinguish the neo-scholastic view of doctrine, based on a crude correspondence theory of truth, from a genuinely cognitive view of doctrine, based on the conviction of the existence of a truly cognitive dimension, element, hint or signpost to propositional statements (McGrath 1990:20)

Therefore, Reformed confessions of faith in forms of propositional statement, insofar as they do not remain an extreme neo-scholastic position but a genuinely cognitive one, might be free from Lindbeck's criticism of the propositional-cognitivist approach.

In terms of antireductionism, McGrath also opposes Lindbeck's criticism of the propositional-cognitivist approach. He says that when doing conceptual works, the propositional-cognitivists prefer using "the non-literal 'four master tropes' of thought and discourse (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony)" to "reducing them to a crudely literal conception of representation," as seen in Calvin's and Zwingli's examples to extensively use rhetorical and non-literal modes of discourse, in the process of both analyzing texts and making theological statements (McGrath 1990:18). McGrath argues,

It is simply a theological truism that no human language can be applied to God univocally; indeed, it is from the recognition, rather than the denial, of this point that cognitive approaches to doctrine begin (McGrath 1990:18).

Therefore, insofar as Reformed theology maintains the theological truism, it is free from Lindbeck's criticism.

Regarding Lindbeck's proposal of the cultural-linguistic theory of doctrine, McGrath (1990:28) focuses on its "intrasemiotic" or "intratextual" character. Such a character implies that like language with grammatical rules, religions operate as "cultural frameworks or mediums which engender a vocabulary and precede inner experience" (McGrath 1990:26). It also implies that "doctrines regulate religions, in much the way grammar regulates language" (McGrath 1990:27). Advocates for the cultural-linguistic model thus claim that meaning is constituted by the use of language and is determined by both the way doctrinal terms operate within a specific community of faith and the way they shape reality and experience (McGrath 1990:27). This cultural-linguistic view

of doctrine as rule has a problem: it does not give an answer to the origin of those doctrinal terms which operate in a religious community. Lindbeck might answer that they are simply given (McGrath 1990:28). For his regulative view of doctrine is based on an intrasystemic view of truth, rather than an ontological one. According to this intrasystemic view, “truth is firmly equated with – virtually to the point of being reduced to – internal consistency,” rather than external or referential correspondence (McGrath 1990:29).

In brief, the cultural-linguistic theory of doctrine sets an ontological limit to itself. It can thus cause a feeling of uneasiness in those who believe that the proximate, albeit not the ultimate, external referent of doctrinal statements is the history of Jesus of Nazareth (McGrath 1990:32). Among them are the Reformers who believe in the living God as external being. In this respect, Leith (2010:213) says that Calvin considers “humankind’s deeply mutual relationship with the living God” as the essence of the Christian life.

#### **5.2.2.4 Concerning ecclesiology seeking an Israel-like church**

Lindbeck’s Israel-like ecclesiology is a response to the awareness that the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches have had since the Second Vatican Council: one of the causes of the Holocaust, the Mass Extermination of the Jews by Nazi throughout Europe during World War II, is anti-Semitism, and this anti-Semitism stems from Christian theology. Lindbeck opposes supersessionism which insists that the Jews are not God’s chosen people anymore due to God’s revocation of covenant and God’s replacement of them with the church because of their unbelief. Supersessionism has permeated into Christian churches, especially gentile Christians since the second century.

Lindbeck argues that Christianity’s claim to Israel-like church should be distinguished from supersessionism. In other words, he insists that Christianity’s supersessionist tendency in church history should be rejected, and nevertheless, the notion of the

church as Israel should be admitted as an essential conviction of Christianity. He argues that the church today should retrieve the church as Israel.

Regarding Lindbeck's notion of Israel-like church, there are some points to be examined. Firstly, it seems similar to Reformed theology's view of the relation between Israel and the church. Covenant theology, one of the main ideas of Reformed theology, claims to one people of God. According to it, God created Adam as the representative of the human race and the covenant head. With Adam's fall, all human beings as his posterity fell to the destiny of death and judgment. However, God made Abraham as the father of many nations, and promised that through Abraham's seed all peoples on earth would be blessed. In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ, the true Israel, has come, and his redemptive work made Abraham covenant fulfilled. As a result, all those who believed in him have become heirs of Abraham covenant. Apostle Paul declares that the gospel is God's power for the salvation of everyone who believes (Rom 1:16), and pronounces that in the gospel, there is no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles (Rom 10:12). In brief, one people of God appear in the history of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in other words, they appear through the redemptive fulfillment of God's covenant of grace made with Abraham. In a Reformed view, therefore, there is no ultimate separation between Israel and the church, based on the belief in the church as the true Israel of God.

The distinction between Israel and the church is a characteristic of dispensationalism. Dispensationalism,<sup>126</sup> classic dispensationalism in particular, argues that Israel as an earthly people should be distinct from the church as the heavenly people in the God's redemptive history. On this, Venema (2000:263) describes,

God's dispensational dealings with these two peoples have two quite distinct ends in view: the salvation of an earthly people that is consummated in an eternal kingdom upon the new earth, and the salvation of a heavenly people

---

<sup>126</sup> Dispensationalism maintains that seven dispensations are found in the Bible: firstly, innocence; secondly, conscience; thirdly, government; fourthly, promise; fifthly, law; sixthly, grace; seventhly, millennial kingdom (Chafer 1974:128). Understanding number seven as dispensational fullness, Larkin (2010:172) names the Book of Revelation "the Book of the Consummation of all the Seven Dispensations of God's Plan and Purpose of the Ages."



that is consummated in an eternal kingdom in the new heavens. Thus, just as God has two distinct peoples and programmes of salvation in history, so he has in mind two quite distinct eternal destinies. The line of separation that keeps Israel and the church apart in history will continue into the final state in which the earthly and heavenly natures of these people will correspond to salvation blessings that are distinctively earthly and heavenly.

Although acknowledging that the salvation through Jesus' redemption is for all people, whether the Jews or the Gentiles, dispensationalism argues that the promises in the Old Testament would be fulfilled not through the church but through Israel as an earthly people in the period of the future dispensation of the kingdom. This makes Reformed theology distinct from dispensationalism. Reformed theology opposes the separation between Israel and the church not only in soteriological aspect but also in ecclesiological aspect. In other words, it maintains that God's salvation is for all those who have faith in Jesus Christ, and affirms that Christ's redemption does not supersede or displace God's salvific plan for the Jews but, rather, fulfills it.

Such Reformed position is reflected in Covenant theology. Covenant theology classifies the history of mankind largely into four parts: God's creation, the fall of mankind, Christ' redemption, and the consummation of salvation. It also views the history from the perspective of three covenants: covenants of redemption, of works, and of grace. Unlike dispensationalism, Covenant theology claims that the church is in organic continuity with Israel and is not a separate replacement entity. In addition, dispensationalism understands grace as a separate dispensation, while Covenant theology maintains that the covenant of grace has continued throughout the history – from God's creation to the consummation of salvation. In brief, Covenant theology is far from supersessionism or replacement theology.

Lindbeck's Israel-like ecclesiology might be closely related to his passion for the visible unity of the church. He pays attention to the ecumenical benefits of retrieving the church as Israel. He says,

Nothing short of this would have much chance of bringing heretofore resistant evangelicals and pentecostals into the search for the visible unity of the

church-not that these or any other groups on either the right or the left of the Christian spectrum are likely to be persuaded under present circumstances that regain a Hebrew Bible and Israel-like understanding of Christian community is both practically possible and divinely imperative (Lindbeck 2004:408).

In brief, Lindbeck's notion of Israel-like church means a nonsupersessionist Israel-like ecclesiology, and also reflects his philo-Semitism. In this respect, his pursuit in Israel-like church might be considered as a theological attempt to apply the concept of the visible unity of the church to the relation between Israel and the church.

#### **5.2.2.5 Concerning ecclesiology based on postliberalism**

Lindbeck's ecclesiology based on postliberalism is, in a sense, a response to wider ecumenism that has spread throughout the world since the mid-twentieth century and sought religious relations appropriate for a postmodern age. In terms of the foundation of religion, postliberalism is in contrast with theological liberalism. Theological liberalism seeks for universal foundations of religion, based on the belief in the universality of religions, whereas postliberalism focuses on the unique characteristics of various religious traditions, with its emphasis on the particularity of religions. In other words, theological liberalism emphasizes the foundational aspect of religion, whereas postliberalism underlies the antifoundational one.

Consequently, Lindbeck's ecclesiology based on postliberalism comes to open the way to a new religious pluralism appropriate for a postmodern age which stresses diversity and relativism. In other words, Lindbeck seeks for religious ecumenicity.

A question arises about whether Lindbeck's postliberal ecclesiology could indeed reach the genuine ecumenicity of religion. Especially, it is doubtful whether among religious traditions which exclusively claim to truth – for example, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam – the genuine religious ecumenicity could be brought about. In case of conflicts among those religions, it is questionable whether there is any standard

according to which postliberalism could solve such conflicts while seeking religious ecumenicity. In other words, it should be examined whether the emphasis of the particularity of religions would be the necessary and sufficient condition for the genuine ecumenicity of religion.

In a Reformed view, it is meaningful that postliberalism seeks to overcome theological liberalism which focuses on the universality of religions and, as a result, comes to disregard their unique characteristics. In other words, postliberalism contributes to opposing theological liberals' stress on the universality, which leads to the ideological insistence on uniformity. Reformed theology, however, questions that despite its contribution, postliberalism could bring about the genuine ecumenicity of religion.

Reformed theology claims to both the universality and the particularity of religions. Such claim can be based on the ideas of the general revelation and the special revelation. Firstly, the general revelation implies the universality of religions. It means that with its goal of meeting and supplying the natural need of creatures for knowledge of God, the general revelation is given to all intelligent beings and accessible to all human beings (Berkhof 1996:39). Bavinck (2003:311) describes the general revelation as follows. Despite the entrance of sin, God continues to reveal himself in his reign over the entire universe throughout history. He displays in creation his attributes, shows in judgment his justice, and discloses himself in the heart and conscience of every single person. He also uses natural and supernatural signs accompanied by revelation to speak in a special way.

Regarding the general revelation, Calvin offers the idea of a seed of religion. By a seed of religion, he means "an awareness of divinity": the knowledge of the existence of God and a certain understanding of his attributes. He insists on the universal existence of the seed in human beings.

Yet there is, as the eminent pagan says, no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God. And they who in other aspects of life seem least to differ from brutes still continue to retain some seed of religion. So deeply does the common

conception occupy the minds of all, so tenaciously does it inhere in the hearts of all! (Calvin 1960a:44)

In brief, Reformed theology's idea of the general revelation implies the universality of religions, saying that a seed of religion is implanted in all human beings.

Reformed theology has something in common with theological liberalism in that it claims to the universality of religions. However, unlike theological liberalism that approaches the universality of religions from a rationalistic view, Reformed theology understands it from a revelatory one. In other words, Reformed theology considers the general revelation as a universal attribute of religion. In a Reformed view, all the religious traditions contain a seed of religion that makes them maintain its universal character in spite of their own characteristics.

Regarding the special revelation, it implies the particularity of religions. The special revelation is the revelation which is based on the redemptive plan of God and seeks to save sinners from their sins and their consequences (Berkhof 1996:39). It is properly understood only by faith and was, in the view of the eternal plan of salvation, in the mind of God before the creation of the world (Berkhof 1996:39). It is given through the Scripture, theophany, dreams and visions, miracles, Urim and Thummim, and Jesus Christ as God's self-revelation and the mediator of both creation and recreation (Bavinck 2003:323-352).

In a Reformed view, Christianity has a difference from other religions in that it claims to the exclusive truth on salvation and the special ways of delivering of it to man, which can be connected with the idea of the particularity of religions.

Reformed theology has something in common with postliberalism in that it claims to the particularity of religions. Like postliberalism, Reformed theology acknowledges and values the unique characteristics of religions: their own culture, customs, communal stories, ethics, etc. However, unlike postliberalism that approaches to the particularity of religions from a cultural and anthropological view, Reformed theology basically approaches it from a revelatory view.

Regarding Reformed theology's idea of the special revelation, it simply means the recognition of religious difference, not the justification of religious superiority. In other words, it rejects any coercive and imperialistic attitude that Christianity as the bearer of the special revelation possibly has. It is much like the principle that Israel as the bearer of the Law should not be blinded by its ethnocentrism.

In brief, Reformed theology equally emphasizes the universality and the particularity of religions. Therefore, in a Reformed view, Lindbeck's postliberal ecclesiology is assessed as overlooking the former by emphasizing the latter.

Then, we need to examine the interdisciplinary character of Lindbeck's postliberal ecclesiology. His ecclesiology is based upon an analysis of churches and religions situated in a postmodern age. In doing such an analysis, and ultimately in seeking a new model of ecumenicity appropriate for this age, he uses interdisciplinary methodology today. For example, he employs Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, Clifford Geertz's anthropology, Peter Berger's sociology, etc. for his theological work. The empirical and interdisciplinary character of Lindbeck's theology is assessed to be a meaningful challenge to the speculation of and the theorization of theology. Especially, this character might be assessed to be in accord with the contextualizing aspect of Reformed ecumenicity. In a Reformed view, however, an emphasis on the revelation as the source of theology is not found in Lindbeck's ecclesiology.<sup>127</sup> In other words, it is, in a Reformed view, assessed that Lindbeck's ecclesiology as a part of theology should have considered the revelatory character of theology.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> According to Bavinck (2003:277), religion is different from science or art because it requires another source than they do; it assumes a revelation that makes possible the communicative fellowship between God and people. Religion is essentially and originally a product of revelation.

<sup>128</sup> In a postliberal circle, there has recently been a trend toward emphasizing the revelatory character of narrative. Lucie-Smith (2016:44) says that "God's revelation of himself" must be considered "God's revelation of the narrative about himself."

### **5.3 A Reformed assessment of ethical implications of Lindbeck's ecclesiology**

Lindbeck's ecclesiology is a postliberal one. Thus, his ecclesial ethics<sup>129</sup> based on his ecclesiology is a postliberal one.<sup>130</sup> It has two important aspects: the intrasystematic view of truth, and the cultural-linguistic view of religion. An examination will be made about these two aspects, and then an assessment of them will be done from a Reformed viewpoint.

#### **5.3.1 An aspect of the intrasystematic view of truth**

Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics opposes theological liberals' universalistic and foundationalist tendency. Instead, it focuses on the unique characteristics of religions. It, also, rejects the scholastic tendency of traditional Protestant theologies. They sought the metaphysical conceptualization of biblical narratives. In other words, they interpreted biblical narratives through extra-biblical metaphysical frameworks. As a result, biblical narratives are reduced to truth claims and are also transformed into propositional statements. This implies that the Bible is under any extra-biblical authority.<sup>131</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> According to Wells (2010:155), ecclesial ethics means Christian ethics that primarily focuses on "the life made possible in Christ for Christians," and does not imply the betterness of or the more deservedness of attention of Christians than others. He says that ecclesial ethics is distinct from universal ethics which focuses on "what is right for anyone and everyone," on the one hand, and from subversive ethics which emphasizes "the particular perspective of the marginalized and excluded," on the other hand. He also points out that ecclesial ethics tells that Christians should "look first to the transformation brought in Christ, rather than the contours of human society, for the sources of ethics."

<sup>130</sup> Lindbeck's postliberal ethics seeks an ethics appropriate for a postmodern age. According to Grenz (1997:206-207), the primary focus of postmodernist Christian ethics is over two things: "[t]he reemerging public interest in ethics" and "[t]he concern for a community-based ethic of being."

<sup>131</sup> In his work (1974), Hans Frei, Lindbeck's colleague at Yale, points out that a loss of the narrative character of the Bible has occurred since the Enlightenment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He says that a great reversal has taken in the interpretation of the Bible: interpretation

Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics is based on the rule theory of doctrine, according to which religions are like languages with their own grammars.<sup>132</sup> For Lindbeck, religions operate as cultural frameworks which produce words and make human experiences possible (McGrath 1990:26). Thus, the meaning of language is determined by the use of words in such frameworks, and doctrines function as rules as to how the words can be used (McGrath 1990:27-28). Doctrines as rules regulate truth claims. Lindbeck (1984:19) says,

Doctrines regulate truth claims by excluding some and permitting others, but the logic of their communally authoritative use hinders or prevents them from specifying positively what is to be affirmed.

Pecknold (2005:5-6) says that doctrines may be considered as being "regulative of the 'semiotic universe' of scripture in the same way that grammars are regulative of other semiotic systems embodied in communal life", reflecting "the actual practices of native speaker" and having "a subtle influence upon first-order practices."

For Lindbeck, the doctrine itself is not the first-order truth claim; rather, it is the second-order reflection of the first-order communal practices.<sup>133</sup>

Here, in contrast to the common supposition, one rarely if ever succeeds in making affirmations with ontological import, but rather engages in explaining, defending, analyzing, and regulating the liturgical, kerygmatic, and ethical modes of speech and action within which such affirmations from time to time occur. Just as grammar by itself affirms nothing either true or false regarding the world in which language is used, but only about language, so theology and doctrine, to the extent that they are second-order activities, assert nothing

---

became "a matter of fitting the biblical story into another world with another story rather than incorporating that world into the biblical story" (Frei 1974:130).

<sup>132</sup> In this respect, Buckley (2002:xi-xiii) regards the rule theory of doctrine, or the cultural-linguistic approach to religion, as "an extended reflection on analogy – on the way cultures and religions are analogous to languages, and languages are embedded in the forms of life of diverse and particular cultures and religions"

<sup>133</sup> Second-order reflection is grounded on first-order experience and not vice versa (McGaughey 1997:183).

either true or false about God and his relation to creatures, but only speak about such assertions (Lindbeck 1984:69).

Doctrine as second-order reflection<sup>134</sup> implies the performative character of doctrine. For doctrinal assertions can be made only in religious utterances, that is, in context of “seeking to align oneself and others performatively with what one takes to be most important in the universe by worshiping, promising, obeying, exhorting, preaching” (Lindbeck 1984:69).

Performative doctrine is connected with the intrasystematic and coherent view of truth. The intrasystematic truth is opposition to the ontological truth, and the coherent truth to the correspondence. For Lindbeck, religious assertions are true “when they cohere with the total relevant context” (Lindbeck 1984:64).<sup>135</sup>

Lindbeck’s ecclesial ethics is intrasystematic because it is based on the intrasystematic view of truth. It is also a performative ethics. It holds that the meaning of religious truth can be found through engagement in religious practices, not in objective realities or religious symbols. Thus, being religious is nothing other than “interiorizing a set of skills derived from a community and enhanced by practice and training” (Wells et al. 2017:203). Also, being a Christian means being accustomed to symbol system of Christianity and at the same time interpreting himself/herself and his/her experience of the world by using Christian religious terms.<sup>136</sup> Wells et al. (2017:203-204) say that Lindbeck’s performative ethics resembles Aristotle’s notion of rationality, according to which rationality is acquired rather than innate; it does not exist

---

<sup>134</sup> Doctrines as second-order reflection, therefore, cannot be judged to be true or false because they operate just as “communally accepted grammatical rules” (Gibbs 2015:9). Hinlicky (2010:373) regards these second-order doctrines as having referential neutrality.

<sup>135</sup> Lindbeck (1984:64) says that the coherence theory of truth applies to both religious and nonreligious domains, and that epistemological realists consider the intrasystematic truth to be a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the ontological truth.

<sup>136</sup> Gleason (2016:7) says that through training and participation, adherents of a religion learn to see the world through the cultural-linguistic frame of the religion, and that the frame “in large part determines how they experience the world and act in it”: although not covering or encapsulating “a more general, universalizable moral intuition,” the frame precedes their experience and action.



“in the mind but in intelligible practices, which must be learnt.” Lindbeck (1984:131) says,

In short, intelligibility comes from skill, not theory, and credibility comes from good performance, not adherence to independently formulated criteria.

Wells et al. (2017:204) also says,

The point instead is that theological truth demands response and participation, and its merits cannot be investigated any other way. For Lindbeck, the proposition “Jesus is Lord” is true, but the only way to assert its truth is to act accordingly.

Lindbeck’s ecclesial ethics is also based on *ad hoc* apologetics which is a postliberal skepticism about extra-biblical foundational apologetics. *Ad hoc* apologetics claims that a religion, like a language, should be understood only by using its own vocabularies, not by accommodating them into alien concepts (Lindbeck 1984:129). Lindbeck says,

Resistance to translation does not wholly exclude apologetics, but this must be of an *ad hoc* and nonfoundational variety rather than standing at the center of theology. The grammar of religion, like that of language, cannot be explicated or learned by analysis of experience, but only by practice.

*Ad hoc* apologetics opposes the extra-systematic apologetics which has the same controlling tendency as post-Cartesian natural theology and the theological liberalism did. Lindbeck takes ancient catechesis as an example of *ad hoc* apologetics. It did not redescribe Christian faith with extra-biblical concepts but sought to teach communal language and practices of religion to new converts (Lindbeck 1984:132). Lindbeck (1984:132) says that *ad hoc* method has been “the primary way of transmitting the faith and winning converts for most religions down through the centuries.” In brief, *ad hoc* apologetics is toward the inward world of a religious community, not its outward world. It emphasizes that theological ethics should be intra-biblical and intra-ecclesiastical, as the truth is intrasystematic.

Implications which Lindbeck's intrasystematic ecclesial ethics has are as follows. Firstly, it is an ethics which emphasizes the communality of religion. The communality of religion here means that religion functions as a communal linguistic framework that expresses individuals' religious experience. Like culture or language, religion is a communal framework that forms individual identity rather than reveals it. So, his intrasystematic ecclesial ethics opposes the individualization of religion: it rather emphasizes the communality of religion.

Secondly, Lindbeck's intrasystematic ecclesial ethics is an ethics which stresses the concept of intratextuality. Intratextuality denotes that meaning is located inside the text. In other words, the meaning is by nature "immanent" (Lindbeck 1984:114). In this respect, Lindbeck's intratextual ecclesial ethics opposes both the propositional-cognitivist and the experiential-expressivist understanding of religion. For they claim to the extratextual location of meaning. The propositional-cognitivist understanding says that religious meaning is located in the objective realities to which the text refers, while the experiential-expressivist one maintains that religious meaning is located in the experiences which the text symbolizes (Lindbeck 1984:114).

Thus the proper way to determine what "God" signifies, for example, is by examining how the word operates within a religion and thereby shapes reality and experience rather than by first establishing its propositional or experiential meaning and reinterpreting or reformulating its uses accordingly. It is in this sense that theological description in the cultural-linguistic mode is intrasemiotic or intratextual" (Lindbeck 1984:114).

Intratextuality implies that no world is more real than the one the text creates. Lindbeck says (1984:117),

A scriptural world is thus able to absorb the universe. It supplies the interpretive framework within which believers seek to live their lives and understand reality."

For Lindbeck, the Bible has "the capacity to provide us with a rough, nonsystematic narrative framework through which we understand all reality" (Hensley 1996:75).

Lindbeck (1984:117) argues that the way Christian communities describe extrascriptural realities and experiences, is shaped by the biblical framework of interpretation much more than is warranted by extra-biblical methodologies. So, he points out the risk of inserting the extrabiblical materials into the biblical world: they will function as “the interpreter rather than the interpreted” (Lindbeck 1984:118). He argues that the notion of intratextuality is reflected on in the Reformers’ biblical interpretation. For example, they rejected the allegorizing method of exegesis and emphasized “intratextuality (*scriptura sui ipsius interpres*)” (Lindbeck 1984:118). By intratextuality, the Reformers meant interpreting the Scripture “by its use, by the *viva vox evangelii*” (Lindbeck 1984:118-119).

Therefore, Lindbeck’s intratextual ecclesial ethics insists that the members of Christian community should be interpreted by the Bible rather than interpret it. In other words, Lindbeck insists that Christians should interpret themselves and their situations in life by Israel’s history and Jesus’ stories, not by contemporary extra-biblical concepts, and seek to live according to the biblical teachings. In this respect, Lindbeck’s ecclesial ethics is different from theological liberals’ attempt to adapt Christianity to modern times.

No longer does theology constantly have to adapt to the changing fashions and demands of contemporary knowledge; instead, contemporary knowledge is judged through the lens of theological perception (Wells et al. 2017:204).

In brief, Lindbeck’s ecclesial ethics is an ethics of intratextuality.

In conclusion, Lindbeck’s intrasystematic ecclesial ethics is an ethics which emphasizes the communality of religion and the intratextuality.

### **5.3.2 An aspect of the cultural-linguistic view of religion**

Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic ecclesial ethics applies to both intra-Christian and interreligious relations.

Regarding intra-Christian relations, Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics seeks intra-Christian unity based on the principle of convergence. Convergence does not mean "a fully harmonious agreement in all aspects" but "the discovery of new formulations of teaching that cease to be mutually contradictory and so cease to form independent causes of the division of the church" (Hinlicky 2010:272). Ecumenical dialogues based on the principle of convergence, therefore, seek to reformulate teaching in such ways that both sides affirm that each's truth claims can be different from the other's (Hinlicky 2010:272). Such reformulations are grounded on the presupposition that there already exist common major doctrines of both sides, such as the beliefs in the God the Trinity and the Christ incarnated as described in the Nicene Creed (Hinlicky 2010:272). The convergence ecumenicity ultimately emphasizes the particularity of those participants. It seeks reconciliation without capitulation, which means the rejection of the suppression of each of them over the other caused by doctrinal differences, and at the same time the pursuit of bringing them into the unity of the church (Hinlicky 2010:273). In this respect, mutual respect is demanded for those participants.

Regarding interreligious relations, Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics is based on the notion of incommensurability. By incommensurability, Lindbeck (1984:48) means that "no equivalents can be found in one language or religion for the crucial terms of the other." Vocabularies of a religion cannot be translated equivalently into those of another one, because between them, there exists categorical difference like one between quantitative and qualitative expressions of reality (Lindbeck 1984:84). Lindbeck (1984:48-49) says,

Similarly, the means for referring in any direct way to the Buddhist Nirvana are lacking in Western religions and the cultures influenced by them and it is, therefore, at least initially puzzling how one can say anything either true or false about Nirvana, or even meaningfully deny it, within these latter contexts. ... The God of the philosophers may or may not exist and may or may not in some respects be assimilable to the God of the Bible, but faith in the biblical deity, according to this view, is logically independent of philosophical arguments over these questions.

In this way, incommensurability implies the denial of any common religious framework, whether it is of the propositional-cognitivist or of the experiential-expressivist character, within which religions can be compared (Lindbeck 1984:49). Those who support incommensurability thus avoid from the introduction of conceptualities from a religion into those of another one. For they think that the introduced ones would be a simple “babbling” in new settings: they would function differently from in their original settings (Lindbeck 1984:49).

An example of an ethics of incommensurability is found in Hauerwas’s narrative ethics. For him, stories in a community have the incommensurable, or untranslatable, character. They are ones peculiar to the community. They shape the community, and the community, in turn, preserves them. They cannot be translated equivalently into within the world of another community. In this respect, Hauerwas (1985:11) says that the church should primarily exist as a community shaped by its own stories which the world does not share. In other words, the church should live as “a community that tells the stories that make Christian virtues possible,”<sup>137</sup> instead of living according to “some universal standard of rational ethics” (Placher 1997:349). In brief, the first ethical task of the church is, for him, to be itself.

Hauerwas, further, insists that the church should not offer “theories of governmental legitimacy” or “strategies for social betterment”; it rather should show “the kind of community possible when trust, and not fear, rules our lives” (Hauerwas 1981:85). Instead of providing “an ethos for democracy or any other form of social organization,” the church should be “a political alternative to every nation, witnessing to the kind of social life possible for those that have been formed by the story of Christ” (Hauerwas 1981:12).

In short, Hauerwas’s ethics grounds on incommensurable biblical stories.

Lindbeck’s ecclesial ethics of incommensurability also implies anti-reductionism. The virtues from stories of a community cannot be reduced to moral principles of

---

<sup>137</sup> In this respect, Hauerwas’s ethics is called *ethics of virtue* or *ethics of character*. Particularly, his emphasis on the virtue of peaceableness led him to pacifism. Placher (1997:321) considers pacifism to be “the normative mode of witness to God’s reign in history.”

contemporary ethical thoughts. This anti-reductionist character of Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics makes different religions have mutual respect.

In conclusion, Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic ecclesial ethics claims that there should be the virtue of mutual respect in intra-Christian relation, based on the principle of convergence, and in interreligious relation, grounded on the concept of incommensurability.

### **5.3.3 A Reformed assessment of Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics**

We will assess one of the problems<sup>138</sup> concerning Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics: the matter of incommensurability.

The notion of incommensurability can raise a question about the continuity in these two relations: one between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world, and one between religions.

Regarding the former relation, incommensurability means that the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world are mutually untranslatable. In this respect, it implies the discontinuity between those two worlds. In particular, any claim to the discontinuity between the world of the Bible and the contemporary world of civilization or technology would be controversial. Regarding the latter relation, incommensurability denotes that the characteristics of a religion are untranslatable and irreducible.

The problem is whether the belief in incommensurability is justifiable. McGrath (1990:87) points out that cultural incommensurability might lead to a quantal approach

---

<sup>138</sup> These problems include what follows. We wonder how Lindbeck's intrasystematic ecclesial ethics, based on the coherence theory of truth, can explain the origin of the terms in a religious system. In this regard, McGrath (1990:28) raises a question: if doctrine is related with the use of language of the Christian idiom, how could this language come into existence, and what, if anything, is its referent object? In addition, it is doubtful whether the cultural-linguistic approach to religion could be properly applied to interreligious relations of Eastern religions, such as Buddhism or Confucianism. For Lindbeck has mainly applied it to interreligious relations of Western religions which, in particular, have similar religious traditions, such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

to history which regards history as comprising “discrete cultural totalities, each of which is incommensurate with its diachronic and synchronic neighbours.” He argues that such a belief is not empirical but just dogmatic because of its disregarding the reality of cultural development (McGrath 1990:87). He emphasizes cultural development through a cumulative process, which means the continuity between the past and the present (McGrath 1990:86).<sup>139</sup> For him, the belief in cultural incommensurability, especially in extreme cultural incommensurability, is neither justifiable nor defensible. So, Lindbeck’s ecclesial ethics must avoid from any belief in extreme incommensurability. Otherwise, it cannot help being charged with theological sectarianism<sup>140</sup> or fideism.<sup>141</sup>

The Reformed notion of revelation can be a solution to the discontinuity between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world, and between religions.

The starting point of Reformed ethics, like that of Reformed dogmatics,<sup>142</sup> is based on God’s revelation (van Keulen 2010:34). In Reformed theology, God’s revelation is generally distinguished in two ways: the general revelation and the special revelation.

Regarding the continuity between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world, Reformed theology can approach it from a revelatory perspective. Reformed theology understands God’s creation and providence as God’s revelation. Bavinck (2003:307) considers the creation to be “first revelation of God, the beginning and foundation of all subsequent revelation”. God first revealed himself outwardly through the creation (Bavinck 2003:307). The event of creation is immediately followed by God’s action of

---

<sup>139</sup> Regarding the continuity, McGrath (1990:87-88) says that it has been evidenced by many important findings, for example, the finding of the continuity between the cultures of the early church and the modern one, and that such findings result from both “an effort of informed empathetic imagination” and “[t]he selective appropriation of the past” as strategies of diminishing the strangeness of the past.

<sup>140</sup> Lindbeck’s ecclesiology implies sectarianism of a sociological rather than theological sense, in that it insists that the church should live “in a manner differentiated from its host society” (Fergusson 2004:36). In this respect, Lindbeck (1984:78) occasionally considers his ecclesiastical position as “sociological sectarianism.”

<sup>141</sup> Lindbeck (1984:130-132) argues that the notions of intraxtuality and postliberal antifoundationalism do not imply fideism or relativism.

<sup>142</sup> Bavinck (2003:58) says that no fundamental difference is found between dogmatics and ethics, and that theological ethics which is distinct from philosophical ethics, originates from dogmatics.

providence (Bavinck 2003:307). God's providence encompasses the entirety of the created world (Helseth 2011:29). Reformed theology holds that God's providence operates through preservation, concurrence, and government, which are always organically and integrally connected (Helseth 2011:31). In brief, the whole world which was created by God and is under his providence, in a Reformed view, is understood as God's revelation.

Reformed theology also considers the Bible as God's revelation, precisely God's special revelation. Bavinck (2003:385) says that the Bible is rooted in the past and is at the same time the product of God's revelation in the history of Israel and in Christ. It is, nevertheless, not simply "an arid story or ancient chronicle but the ever-living, eternally youthful Word, which God, now and always, issues to his people" (Bavinck 2003:385). Bavinck (2003:385) describes the Scripture as "the living voice of God."

In it [the Scripture] God daily comes to his people. In it he speaks to his people, not from afar but from nearby. In it he reveals himself, from day to day, to believers in the fullness of his truth and grace. Through it he works his miracles of compassion and faithfulness. Scripture is the ongoing rapport between heaven and earth, between Christ and his church, between God and his children (Bavinck 2003:385).

In this way, the Bible is, in a Reformed view, God's revelation as the living voice of God.

In brief, Reformed theology understands that both the Bible and God's creation and providence belong to God's revelation. Thus, in a Reformed view, there exists a revelatory continuity between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world.<sup>143</sup> In this way, Reformed theology can solve the problem of Lindbeck's notion of

---

<sup>143</sup> Of course, there exists a revelatory difference between them, in that the world of the Bible is connected with the Bible as God's special revelation, and the extra-biblical world is connected with God's creation and providence as God's general revelation. In this respect, each of these two worlds has its own revelatory particularity.



incommensurability that it has difficulty in explaining the continuity between those two worlds.

Regarding the continuity between religions, Reformed theology can also approach it from a revelatory perspective. It considers all religions as the bearers of the general revelation.<sup>144</sup> In this respect, religions, in a Reformed view, have a revelatory continuity. Thus, Reformed theology can provide a way to explain the continuity between religions, while Lindbeck's notion of incommensurability has difficulty in doing so.

In conclusion, Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics can, in a Reformed view, be assessed as follows. Regarding its challenging aspects, firstly, Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics is an attempt to overcome theological liberals' reductionist tendency, by emphasizing the particularity and the differences of religions. Secondly, it emphasizes the intratextual and performative aspects of Christian ethics. Thirdly, it seeks to establish the interreligious relations appropriate for our age. We, nevertheless, can find that it has a weakness: its notion of incommensurability has difficulty in explaining the continuity between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world, and between religions. In contrast, Reformed theology can solve the problem by using the idea of revelatory continuity.

---

<sup>144</sup> On this part, this dissertation has dealt in the discussion of the universality of religions (5.2.2.5 Concerning Postliberalism) and in the description of Kim's inclusive transforming position (5.2.1.2.2 Contextualizing Character of Reformed Ecumenicity).

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

This chapter is a summary of what has been examined and assessed about Lindbeck's ecclesiology and its ethical implications.

There have been recent attempts to interpret Lindbeck's life and theology from various perspectives, as presented in chapter two. The problem is that none of these can provide a holistic view of his life and thoughts. Thus, this dissertation aims to discover his ultimate concern. The ultimate concern here refers to the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology.

This dissertation suggested the hypothesis that the hermeneutical core of Lindbeck's theology is an ecclesiastical concern. To support the hypothesis, this dissertation first examined the strongest possible rival view to the suggested hypothesis: the hermeneutical core is Lindbeck's doctrinal concern. This dissertation reached the conclusion that although a doctrinal concern is the central point of all his theological arguments, especially in his work *The Nature of Doctrine*, it basically serves another concern, that is, an ecclesiastical concern. This dissertation, then, provided two kinds of evidence to justify the suggested hypothesis: internal and external evidences. Internal evidence indicates that throughout Lindbeck's life, an ecclesiastical concern has been developing and actively working. External evidence implies that an ecclesiastical concern is at the core of postliberalism and the Yale school in which Lindbeck has been involved. In brief, the hermeneutical core of his theology is an ecclesiastical concern. In this respect, his theology can be defined as an ecclesiology.

The center of Lindbeck's ecclesiology is in his passion for ecumenism. The goal that he seeks is the unity of the church. The whole of his life and thoughts are motivated by ecumenism, are involved in it, are committed to it, and are led by it. Therefore, Lindbeck's ecclesiology can be defined as an ecumenical ecclesiology.

The following characteristics have been identified in Lindbeck's ecumenical ecclesiology. Firstly, it is a unitive ecumenicity-centred ecclesiology. Unitive

ecumenism seeks visible unity of the church without doctrinal capitulation, based on profound changes in the participants. So, it is distinguished from the conversion of some churches from one ecclesial allegiance to another. Unitive ecumenism is in accord with so-called convergence ecumenism. Convergence ecumenism seeks the visible unity of the church by focusing on the points of agreement and minimizing those of doctrinal difference.

Secondly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology is a diachronic approach to the unity of the church. It means that the fundamental cause of disunity of modern Western churches is found in an event of the past mainstream Christian history, namely the sixteenth century Reformation. According to this perspective, a true way to achieving today's ecclesial unity is to overcome ecclesial division that Reformation has brought about. In this regard, unitive ecumenism is distinguished from interdenominationalism. For interdenominationalism focuses on the present rather than the past. In other words, it aims at solving the present needs, not the past problems. Unitive ecumenism in which Lindbeck has been involved emphasizes the continuity between the thoughts of the Reformers and the Roman Catholic heritage. It considers the Reformation as a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church.

Thirdly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology tries to give theological legitimacy to ecumenical movement through a quest of the nature of doctrine. He criticized traditional views of the doctrine, namely, the propositional-cognitivist and the experiential-expressivist approaches to doctrine, and suggested as an alternative his new theory of doctrine, namely, the cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine. Such criticism and suggestion are related to the goal of a unitive ecumenicity: the reconciliation of ecclesial bodies with doctrinal differences. Generally, theories of doctrine are dealt in the introductory section of systematic theology books. It means that the knowledge of the nature of doctrine is the basis of particular doctrines of systematic theology. Therefore, Lindbeck's quest of the nature of doctrine is assessed as an attempt of making unitive ecumenism theologically legitimized on a basis of a new doctrinal hermeneutics.

Fourthly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology seeks an Israel-like church. It seeks to overcome the supersessionist thinking of Israel and the church separately. The problem of

supersessionism is that it is the main cause of anti-Semitism of Western Christianity nations. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church and other ecclesial bodies have condemned supersessionism. About this, Lindbeck holds that supersessionist positions should be rejected, but communal benefits of the notion of Israel-like church should be examined properly. Lindbeck is cautious against the quasi-Marcionite tendency of our times, and says that a nonsupersessionist Israel-like ecclesiology is biblically possible and is pragmatically demanded for ecumenical benefits.

Fifthly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology is based on postliberalism. Postliberalism is a theological scheme for Lindbeck's dealing with interreligious relations today. Unlike theological liberalism which seeks universal foundations of religion, postliberal pattern of thinking regards highly the uniqueness and particularity of religious traditions. Postliberalism argues that not only the ecclesial division caused by doctrinal differences but also conflicts among religions can be solved by mutual respect for the particularity of each party, based on its own community with its communal identity-holding stories.

Reformed ecumenicity based on Reformed identity is described as follows.

Regarding Reformed identity, this dissertation proposed a classical and contextualizing Reformed theology. The term *classical* means Calvinism-rooted. Generally, Calvinism is said to maintain these main ideas: five points known as TULIP, five Solas of the Reformation, Covenant Theology, and the idea of the sovereignty of God.

The term *contextualizing*, then, refers to the effort to make the text relevant to the context by applying it to every dimension of and to all the relationships in the context, without changing the message of the text. Reformed theology should be a contextualizing theology which interprets, communicates, and applies Calvinist convictions within a particular cultural context. To do this, Reformed theologians have to perceive the various challenges of given situations, and respond to them according to the principles of Reformed heritage. The term *contextualizing* also refers to a continuous search for Reformed identity in the setting of the Word of God and the

challenges of the world. With regard to the plurality of our age, contextualizing Reformed theology considers Christians to live in a setting of inner pluralism, based on shared, or common, Reformed convictions. Concerning postmodernism, Reformed theology can explain its historical significance, describe its challenges against Christianity, and give a Reformed response to those challenges, based on the principle of *Sola Scriptura*.

A classical view of Reformed Ecumenicity can be derived from Calvin's notions of the visible church and the invisible church. He describes the visible church as follows. Firstly, it is distinguishable from the invisible church. Secondly, it professes the true religion. Thirdly, it emphasizes the practices of the church, namely, the ministry instituted by Christ. Fourthly, it comprehends not only true and lawful churches but also corrupted ones which are tolerated for a time. Fifthly, nevertheless, it should be honored by and be in continuous communion with the children of God. Reformed ecumenicity based on Calvinist heritage emphasizes both the truth-seeking and the unity-seeking tasks.

Reformed theology today is within the context of postmodernism and religious pluralism. In postmodern ecumenical settings, Reformed theologians have to seek a humble and true ecumenicity. The term *humble* means that they should participate in ecumenical dialogues with respect for other religions, based on the belief that in them, the general revelation of God is given. The term *true* means that Reformed theology should ultimately testify to other religions about Jesus Christ, based on the belief that he is God's unique revelation of salvation. The contextualizing character of Reformed ecumenicity is also related to the Calvinist tradition of cherishing cultural diversity. So, Reformed churches today should affirm and practice their convictions of faith with their emphasis on cultural diversity. Cultural diversity also implies that Reformed theology should reaffirm its cultural mandate: Christ as the Lord of culture. Reformed churches need to make use of culture as a great opportunity to propagate the gospel to different people in different contexts.

The following are Reformed assessments of Lindbeck's ecclesiology. Firstly, Lindbeck's understanding of the visible church is different from Calvin's. For Calvin,

the term *visible* is opposite to the term *invisible*. Lindbeck, however, uses it to refer to institutional churches which are in contrast with noninstitutional churches. In addition, Reformed ecumenicity is the truth-seeking ecumenicity, based on the authority of the Word of God. This means that churches involving in ecumenical dialogues can carry out mutual correction by the biblical truth on the basis of love. In this respect, Reformed ecumenicity is distinguishable from a unitive ecumenicity based on the notion of convergence, which implies reconciliation without capitulation.

Secondly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology is a diachronic approach to ecclesial unity. The diachronic approach implies that there is continuity between the Reformation schism and ecclesial divisions today. Regarding the approach, he recognizes that the Reformation was a reform within the Roman Catholic Church. From a Reformed viewpoint, his understanding of the Reformation, however, is questionable. For the Reformers might consider it as a reform against the institution, based on the teachings of the Bible. On the other hand, Lindbeck's focus on a diachronic approach is related to his antipathy to denominationalism. Therefore, it can be said that the antipathy is too excessive.

Thirdly, Lindbeck's attempt to theologially legitimize unitive ecumenism through the quest of the nature of doctrine might be assessed as a bold and challenging one. For it implies that he tried to modify the contents of the subjects in the introductory section of systematic theology books – in a sense, the foundations of systematic theology – in order to defend his own ecclesiology. The propositional-cognitivist approach to doctrine which he uses for such theological legitimacy has a problem. His criticism of the propositional-cognitivist position is not justifiable. He confuses the propositional-cognitivist approach with a crudely realist, or ontological, approach which is often taken by extreme neo-scholastics. Insofar as Reformed theology maintains the theological truism that no human language can be applied to God univocally, and remains a genuinely cognitive doctrinal position, it is far from Lindbeck's criticism.

Fourthly, Lindbeck's notion of Israel-like church refers to nonsupersessionist Israel-like ecclesiology. It means that he attempts to apply his vision of the visible ecclesial unity to the relation between Israel and the church. Thinking of Israel and the church

separately is not a characteristic of Reformed theology but of dispensationalism. Reformed theology, covenant theology in particular, claims that the church is in organic continuity with Israel and is not a separate replacement entity.

Fifthly, Lindbeck's ecclesiology based on postliberalism opens the way to new interreligious relations appropriate for a postmodern age with its emphasis on the particularity of religions. The problem is that if conflicts would take place among religions with their exclusive claims to truth, it is doubtful whether genuine reconciliation can be achieved. Reformed theology shares commonality with postliberalism in that it acknowledges the particularity of religions. In terms of the source of the particularity of religions, however, it is distinguishable from postliberalism. Postliberalism identifies the source as cultural or anthropological differences of religions, whereas Reformed theology can basically find it in its notion of two types of revelation: the general revelation and the special revelation. The general revelation implies the universality of religions, saying that a seed of knowledge of God is implanted in all human beings and in even all religions on earth. In this respect, unlike postliberalism, Reformed theology can abstain extreme claim to the particularity of religions. The special revelation implies the particularity of religions, stating that knowledge of God's salvation is given only in such special ways as Jesus Christ, the incarnated self-revelation of God, the Bible, etc. In this respect, Reformed theology is far from any extreme claim to the universality of religions which theological liberalism emphasizes. In brief, Reformed theology can emphasize equally the universality and the particularity of religions, based on the notion of revelation.

Reformed assessment of Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics brings about the following results.

Lindbeck's ecclesiology is a postliberal one. Thus, his ecclesial ethics based on his ecclesiology is a postliberal one. It has two important aspects: the intrasystematic view of truth, and the cultural-linguistic view of religion.

Lindbeck's intrasystematic ecclesial ethics is a performative ethics. It holds that the meaning of religious truth can be found through engagement in religious practices, not in objective realities or religious symbols. So, being a Christian means being

accustomed to symbol system of Christianity and at the same time interpreting himself/herself and his/her experience of the world by using Christian religious terms.

Lindbeck's intrasystematic ecclesial ethics is based on *ad hoc* apologetics which is a postliberal skepticism about extra-biblical foundational apologetics. *Ad hoc* apologetics claims that a religion, like a language, should be understood only by using its own vocabularies, not by accommodating them into alien concepts.

Implications which Lindbeck's intrasystematic ecclesial ethics has are as follows. Firstly, it is an ethics which emphasizes the communality of religion. It says that religion functions as a communal linguistic framework that expresses individuals' religious experience. In other words, it opposes the individualization of religion. Secondly, it is an ethics which stresses the concept of intratextuality. Intratextuality denotes that meaning is located inside the text. Therefore, Lindbeck's intratextual ecclesial ethics insists that the members of Christian community should be interpreted by the Bible instead of interpreting it, and seek to live according to the biblical teachings.

Regarding intra-Christian relations, Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic ecclesial ethics seeks intra-Christian unity based on the principle of convergence. Convergence ecumenism seeks reconciliation without capitulation, which means the rejection of the suppression of each of the participants in dialogues over the other because of doctrinal differences. In this respect, mutual respect is demanded for convergence ecumenicity.

Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic ecclesial ethics also applies to interreligious relations, based on the notion of incommensurability. Incommensurability means that vocabularies of one religion cannot be translated into those of another religion, because there is no common religious framework between them. Thus, those who support incommensurability should avoid adapting conceptualities from one religion to other religions. His ecclesial ethics also implies anti-reductionism. The virtues from stories of a community cannot be reduced to moral principles of contemporary ethical thoughts. This anti-reductionist character of Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics makes different religions have mutual respect.



Concerning Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics, there is a problem relating to incommensurability. Regarding incommensurability, Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics argues that there is untranslatability between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world, and between religions. In other words, it implies that there is a discontinuity in those two kinds of relation.

The Reformed notion of revelation can be a solution to the discontinuity caused by incommensurability. Regarding the relation between the world of the Bible and the extra-biblical world, Reformed theology can approach it from a revelatory perspective. It understands God's creation and providence as God's revelation. It also considers the Bible as God's revelation, precisely God's special revelation. In brief, Reformed theology understands that both the Bible and God's creation and providence belong to God's revelation. Thus, in a Reformed view, there exists a revelatory continuity between those two worlds. Regarding interreligious relations, Reformed theology can also approach them from a revelatory perspective. It considers all religions as the bearers of the general revelation. In this respect, religions, in a Reformed view, have a revelatory continuity.

In conclusion, Lindbeck's ecclesial ethics can, in a Reformed view, be assessed as follows. It has some challenging points. Firstly, it seeks to overcome theological liberals' reductionist tendency, by emphasizing the particularity and the differences of religions. Secondly, it stresses the performative and communal aspect of religions. Thirdly, it seeks to build the interreligious relations appropriate for our age. It, nevertheless, has a weakness. It has a limitation to solving the discontinuity caused by incommensurability. In a Reformed view, it places one-sided emphasis on the particularity of religions.

## < Works Consulted >

- Alston, W M & Welker Kim, Y H 2003. Introduction, in Alston, W M & Welker, M (eds), *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, ix-xiv. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Ashford, B R 2007. Wittgenstein's Theologians? A Survey of Ludwig Wittgenstein's Impact on Theology. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50/2, 357-375.
- Balthasar, H U v 1988. *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol I: Prolegomena*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.
- Balthasar, H U v 1990. *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.
- Balthasar, H U v 1993. *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol III: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.
- Balthasar, H U v 1994. *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol IV: The Action*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.
- Balthasar, H U v 2003. *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol V: The Last Act*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.
- Barth, K 1957. *Church Dogmatics II.1 The Doctrine of God*, tr by T H L Parker, et al. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark LTD.
- Bavinck, H 1980. *The Certainty of Faith*. Ontario, Canada: Paideia Press.
- Bavinck, H 2003. *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed by J Bolt, tr by J Vriend. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- Bavinck, H 2011. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Abridged in One Volume, ed by J Bolt. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Berkhof, H 1979. *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*. Revised Edition, tr by S Woudstra. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Berkhof, L 1996. *Systematic Theology*. New Combined Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Berkhof, L 1996. *Systematic Theology*. New Combined Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Berkhof, L 2003. *Manual of Christian Doctrine*. Second Edition. Arlington Heights, IL: Christian Liberty Press.
- Boice, J M 2001. *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?: Recovering the Doctrines that shook the World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Brennan III, W J 2012. *Karl Barth Among the Postliberals*. A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary, May 2012.
- Brockman, D R 2011. *No Longer the Same: Religious Others and the Liberation of Christian Theology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Buckley, J J 2002. Introduction: Radical Traditions: Evangelical, Catholic and Postliberal, in Lindbeck, G A, & Buckley, J J (eds), *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, vii-xviii. London: SCM Press.
- Buckley, J J, et al. (ed) 2011. *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Burrell, D B 1986. *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Burrell, D B 2000. *Friendship and Ways to Truth*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Burrell, D B 2004. *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Burrell, D B 2011. *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Byassee, J 2006. Going Catholic: Six Journeys to Rome. *The Christian Century* vol. 123, no. 17, viewed 12 February 2015 from <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/religion/1842431/posts?page=1>.
- Calvin, J 1960a. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (two volume set). Vol 1, ed by J T McNeill, tr by F L Battles. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Calvin, J 1960b. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (two volume set). Vol 2, ed by J T McNeill, tr by F L Battles. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Carter, J R 2012. *In the Company of Friends: Exploring Faith and Understanding with Buddhists and Christians*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Cathey, R A 2009. *God in Postliberal Perspective: Between Realism and Non-Realism*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Chafer, L S 1974. *Major Bible Themes: 52 Vital Doctrines of the Scripture Simplified and Explained*, revised by J F Walvoord. Grand Rapids, MI: ZondervanPublishingHouse.
- Christian, W A 1972. *Oppositions of Religious Doctrines*. London: Macmillan.
- Clack, B & Clack B R 2008. *Philosophy of Religion: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

- Clark, T 2010. The Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 3, 203-206.
- Columbia Theological Seminary 2015, *Dr. George W. Stroup J.B. Green Professor of Theology*, viewed 18 March 2015 from <http://www.ctsnet.edu/faculty-member?id=36>.
- Connecticut College 2015. *Garrett Green*, viewed 18 March 2015 from <http://www.conncoll.edu/directories/emeritus-faculty/garrett-green>.
- Constantine-Jackson, J A 2012. Redeemed Conversation: Selected Medieval Contributions to a Theology of Discourse. ThD thesis, the Faculty of Theology of Regis College and the Department of the Toronto School of Theology, Regis College and the University of Toronto.
- Cuddeback, J A 2004. Truth and Friendship: The Importance of the Conversation of Friends, in Trapani, Jr., J G (ed), *Truth Matters: Essays in Honor of Jacques Maritain*, 26-33. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Cummings, O F, 2015. *One Body in Christ: Ecumenical Snapshots*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- DeHart, P J 2006. *The Trial of the Witnesses: The Rise and Decline of Postliberal Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Demson, D E 2012. *Hans Frei & Karl Barth: Different Ways of Reading Scripture*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- DiNoia, J A 1992. *The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press.
- DiNoia, J A 2004. The Church in the Gospel: Catholics and Evangelicals in Conversation, *Pro Ecclesia* 13, 58-69.

- Douglass, J D 2004. Calvin in Ecumenical Context, in McKim, D K (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, 305-316. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Douglass, J D. *A Reformed Perspective on the Ecumenical Movement*. viewed 13 August 2017 from <http://www.religion-online.org/article/a-reformed-perspective-on-the-ecumenical-movement>.
- Dorrien, G 2001. The Origins of Postliberalism: A Third Way in Theology? *The Christian Century* July 4-11, 16-21.
- Doyle, D M 2005. The Contribution of a Lifetime: George Lindbeck's the Church in a Postliberal Age. *Modern Theology* 21:1, 157-162.
- Durbin II, E W 2008. Is Religious Diversity a Problem to be Solved?, in Tilley, T W, et al., *Religious Diversity and the American Experience: A Theological Approach*, 110-124. New York: Continuum.
- Eckerstorfer, B A., OSB 2001. *Kirche in der Postmodernen Welt: Der Beitrag George Lindbecks zu Einer Neuen Verhältnisbestimmung*. Innsbruck; Wien, Austria: Tyrolia Verlaganstalt.
- Eckerstorfer, B A., OSB 2004. The One Church in the Postmodern World: Reflections on the life and thought of George Lindbeck, *Pro Ecclesia* 8, no.4, 399-423.
- Engle, R W 1983. Contextualization in Missions: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal. *Grace Theological Journal* 4.1, 85-107.
- Fackre, G 1993. *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective*. MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Faith & Readership 2010. *David B. Burrell: Crucible of Friendships*, viewed 14 March 2015 from <http://www.faithandleadership.com/qa/david-b-burrell-crucible-friendships>.
- Fergusson, D 2004. *Community, Liberalism and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Fiorenza, F S, *et al.* 2014. Biographical Note, in Thiemann, R F, *The Humble Sublime: Secularity and the Politics of Belief*, xvii-xxi. New York, NY: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Fowl, S E (ed) 1997. *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Frei, H W 1974. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Frei, H W 1975. *The Identity of Jesus Christ*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Frei, H W 1986. The "Literal Reading" of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch Or Will It Break?, in McConnell, F D (ed), *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition*, 36-77. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frei, H W 1992. *Types of Christian Theology*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Frei, H W 1997. *The Identity of Jesus Christ*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Fujiwara, A 2012. *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context: A Believers' Church Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Fulkerson, M M 1996. Toward a Materialist Christian Social Criticism: Accommodation and Culture Reconsidered, in Davaney, S & Hopkins, D N (eds),

*Changing Conversations: Cultural Analysis and Religious Reflection*, 43-58. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gassmann, G 1990. The Decree on Ecumenism and Its Ecclesiological Significance, in Horgan, T D (ed.), *Walking Together: Roman Catholics and Ecumenism Twenty-five Years after Vatican II*, 89-95. MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Gassmann, G 1999. *Fortress Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions*. MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers.

Gassmann, G, et al. 2001. *Historical Dictionary of Lutheranism*. London: Scarecrow Press.

Geertz, C J 1973. Religion as a Cultural System, in Geertz, C, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 87-125. New York: Basic Books.

Gibbs, J 2015. *Apologetics after Lindbeck: Faith, Reason, and the Cultural-Linguistic Turn*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.

Gleason, P 2016. From Jürgen Habermas to George Lindbeck: On Translating Religious Concepts into Secular Terms. *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 15.1, 1-12.

Green, G 1989. *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Grenz, S J 1996. *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Grenz, S J 1997. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



- Grenz, S J 1999. From Liberalism to Postliberalism: Theology in the 20th Century. *Review and Expositor* 96, 385-410.
- Gunton, C 1995. *A Brief Theology of Revelation*. London: T&T Clark.
- Hallisey, C 2012. Foreword, in Carter, J R, *In the Company of Friends: Exploring Faith and Understanding with Buddhists and Christians*, xi-xxi. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Harrison, V S 2006. The Pragmatics of Defining Religion in a Multi-Cultural World. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 59, 133-152.
- Hastings, T J 2004. George Lindbeck and Thomas F. Torrance on Christian Language and the Knowledge of God, in Wright, D R & Kuentzel, J D (eds.), *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology*, 252-278. MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Hauerwas, S 1981. *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Hauerwas, S 1983. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Hauerwas, S 1985. *Against the Nations: War and Survival in a Liberal Society*. Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press.
- Hauerwas, S 1993. *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Hauerwas, S 1994. *Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Hauerwas, S 2007. The End of Religious Pluralism: A Tribute to David Burrell, in Banchoff, T (ed), *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*, 283-300. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Helseth, P K 2011. God Causes All Things, in P K Helseth, et al., *Four Views on Divine Providence*, ed by S N Gundry, et al. 25-52. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Hensley, J 1996. Are Postliberals Necessarily Antirealists?: Reexamining the Metaphysics of Lindbeck's Postliberal Theology. In Phillips, T R & Okholm, D L (eds), *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals & Postliberals in Conversation*, 69-80. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Hick, J 1989. *An interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*. London: Macmillan.
- Hinlicky, P R 2010. *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Hinze, B E 1995. Postliberal Theology and Roman Catholic Theology. *Religious Studies Review* vol 21, no 4, 299-304.
- Hollenbach, D S J 2003. *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Holmer, P L 2013a. *Communicating the Faith Indirectly: Selected Sermons, Addresses, and Prayers*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.
- Holmer, P L 2013b. *On Kierkegaard and the Truth*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.
- Holmer, P L 2013c. *Thinking the Faith with Passion*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.

- Hopper, D H 2011. *Divine Transcendence and the Culture of Change*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Horst, M 1988. Disciplined by Theology: A Profile of Paul Holmer. *The Christian Century* October 12, 891-895.
- Horton, M 2006. *Introducing Covenant Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Horton, M 2011. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Hudson, W D 1975. *Wittgenstein and Religious Belief.: New Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*. London: Macmillan.
- Hunsinger, G 2000. *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Hunsinger, G 2003. Postliberal Theology, in Vanhoozer, K J (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, 42-57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunsinger, G 2004. *For the Sake of the World: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Hunsinger, G 2008. *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunsinger, G 2015. *Conversational Theology: Essays on Ecumenical, Postliberal, and Political Themes, with Special Reference to Karl Barth*. London, UK; New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark.
- Kelsey, D H 1985. *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

- Kelsey, D H 1992. *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School?*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Kelsey, D H 1993. *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Kelsey, D H 1999. *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.
- Kerr, F 1997. *Theology After Wittgenstein*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
- Kibira, J M 1980. Between Two Assemblies, in The Lutheran World Federation Department of Communication (ed), *LWF Documentation Formerly Lutheran World* 4, 3-8. Stuttgart, Germany: Kreuz Verlag Erich Breitsohl GmbH & Co..
- Kim, Y H 2003. The Identity of Reformed Theology and Its Ecumenicity in the Twenty-First Century: Reformed Theology as Transformational Cultural Theology, in Alston, W M & Welker, M (eds), *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, 3-19. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Knight, J A 2013. *Liberalism Versus Postliberalism: The Great Divide in Twentieth-Century Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kuyper, A 1931. *Lectures on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Larkin, C 2010. *Dispensational Truth: God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages*. New York, NY: Cosimo, Inc.
- Lassner, P & Trubowitz, L 2008. Introduction, in Lassner, P & Trubowitz, L (eds), *Antisemitism and Philosemitism in the Twentieth and Twenty-First*

*Centuries: Representing Jews, Jewishness, and Modern Culture*, 7-17. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses.

Leith, J H 2010. *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Let's Talk 2001, *Stanley Hauerwas: Celebrity, Theologian, and Reviver*, viewed 18 March 2015 from <http://www.mcsletstalk.org/v6n32.htm>.

Levering, M 2010. *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity*. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications.

Lindbeck, G A 1965. *Dialogue on the Way: Protestants Report from Rome on the Vatican Council*. MN: Augsburg Pub House.

Lindbeck, G A 1967. Discovering Thomas. *Una Sancta* 24. no. 1, 45-52.

Lindbeck, G A 1970. *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology: Vatican II, Catalyst for Change*. London: SPCK.

Lindbeck, G A 1984. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. London: SPCK.

Lindbeck, G A 2004. Paris, Rome, Jerusalem: An Ecumenical Journey. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 41, 3-4, Summer-Fall, 389-408.

Lindbeck, G A 2005. The Unity We Seek; Setting the Agenda for Ecumenism, *The Christian Century* August 9, 28-31,

Lindbeck, G A (interviewee) 2006. Performing the Faith: an Interview with George Lindbeck, *The Christian Century* Nov. 28, 28-35.

Lindbeck, G A, & Buckley, J J (eds.) 2002. *The Church in a Postliberal Age*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Lindbeck, G A, et al. 1996. A Panel Discussion, in Phillips, T R & Okholm, D L (eds.), *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals & Postliberals in Conversation*, 246-253. IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Loyola University 2012. *Curriculum Vitae October 2012*, viewed 17 March 2015 from [https://www.google.co.kr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CDMQFjAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.loyola.edu%2F~%2Fmedia%2Facademic%2Ftheology%2Fdocuments%2Fvate%2Fbuckley.ashx&ei=lp8HVdODIeHLmAW84YLwCw&usg=AFQjCNH5C3PBIDKrA87APw\\_4kYPLZUcUjg&sig2=B5hTQ3FEzRLszDZpnlQVAQ](https://www.google.co.kr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CDMQFjAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.loyola.edu%2F~%2Fmedia%2Facademic%2Ftheology%2Fdocuments%2Fvate%2Fbuckley.ashx&ei=lp8HVdODIeHLmAW84YLwCw&usg=AFQjCNH5C3PBIDKrA87APw_4kYPLZUcUjg&sig2=B5hTQ3FEzRLszDZpnlQVAQ).
- Lucie-Smith, A 2016. *Narrative Theology and Moral Theology: The Infinite Horizon*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mangina, J L 2004. *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*. KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Marga, A 2010. *Karl Barth's Dialogue with Catholicism in Göttingen and Münster*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Marino, G (ed) 2004. *Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter: A Publication of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library*. Northfield, MN: St Olaf College.
- Marshall, B D 2004. *Trinity and Truth*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Marshall, B D 2013. The Theologian's Ecclesial Vocation. *First Things*, the October edition, 41-45.
- Marshall, I H 2004. *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Martin, D B 2008. *Pedagogy of the Bible: An Analysis and Proposal*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

- Mattox, M L & Roeber, A G 2012. *Changing Churches: An Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran Theological Conversation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- McGaughey, D R 1997. *Strangers and Pilgrims: On the Role of Aporiai in Theology*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- McGrath, A E 1990. *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- McGrath, A E (ed.) 1993. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- McGrath, A E 1996a. *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- McGrath, A E 1996b. An Evangelical Evaluation of Postliberalism. in Phillips, T R & Okholm, D L (eds), *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals & Postliberals in Conversation*, 23-44. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- McGrath, A E 2011. *Christian Theology: An introduction*, Fifth Edition. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- McKenny, G 2010. *The Analogy of Grace: Karl Barth's Moral Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Michener, R T 2013. *Postliberal Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark.
- Middleton, D J N 2004. Scratching the Barthian Itch: A Theological Reading of John Updike's Roger's version, in Jasper, D, et al. (eds), *Believing in the Text: Essays from the Centre for the Study of Literature, Theology and*

*the Arts, University of Glasgow (Religions and Discourse vol. 18)*, 159-176. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

Molleur, J 2005. George Sumner, The First and the Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions. *The Anglican Theological Review* vol. 87, no. 3, 521.

Moon, B H 2012. The Root of Korean Presbyterian Theology: Centered on Christological Ecclesiology of Calvin, Knox, Westminster Confession of Faith, and Hyung Ryong Park. *Korea Reformed Journal* 22-0, 119-156.

Moyaert, M 2011. *Fragile Identities: Towards a Theology of Interreligious Hospitality*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Moyaert, M 2012a. Postliberalism, Religious Diversity, and Interreligious Dialogue: A Critical Analysis of George Lindbeck's Fiduciary Interests. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 47.1 (Winter), 64-86.

Moyaert, M 2012b. Recent Developments in the Theology of Interreligious Dialogue: From Soteriological Openness to Hermeneutical Openness. *Modern Theology* 28:1, 25-52.

Murphy, N 1990. *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Nelson, R D 2013. *The Interruptive Word: Eberhard Jüngel on the Sacramental Structure of God's Relation to the World*. London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark.

Neuhaus, R J 2007. *Bashing Darwin, Becoming Catholic*, viewed 14 March 2015 from <http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2007/03/bashing-darwin-becoming-cathol>.



- Neville, R C 2009. *Realism in Religion: A Pragmatist's Perspective*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Noll, M A 2011. *Protestantism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Noonan, J T, Jr 1993. Development in Moral Doctrine. *Theological Studies* 54, 662-677.
- Ochs, P 2005. *Peirce, Pragmatism and the Logic of Scripture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olson, R E 2013. *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Packer, J I 2010. Introduction on Covenant Theology, in Witsius, H, *The Economy of the Covenants: Between God and Man, vol 1, 27-43*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books.
- Paeth, S R 2008. *Exodus Church and Civil Society: Public Theology and Social Theory in the Work of Jürgen Moltmann*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Pecknold, C C 2005. *Transforming Postliberal Theology: George Lindbeck, Pragmatism and Scripture*. New York: T.&T. Clark.
- Pink, A W 2008. *The Sovereignty of God*. Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications.
- Placher, W C 1983. *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Placher, W C 1989. *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

- Placher, W C 1994. *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Placher, W C 1997. Postliberal Theology, in Ford, D F (ed.), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, second edition, 343-356. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Placher, W C 2007. *The Triune God: An Essay in Postliberal Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Placher, W C & Willis-Watkins, D 1992. *Belonging to God: A Commentary on "A Brief Statement of Faith"*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Plantinga, C Jr. 2001. *A Sure Thing: What We Believe and Why*. MI: CRC Publications.
- Pokrifka, T 2010. *Redescribing God: The Roles of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason in Karl Barth's Doctrines of Divine Unity, Constancy, and Eternity*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.
- Princeton Theological Seminary n.d., *George Hunsinger*, viewed 18 March 2015 from <http://www.ptsem.edu/index.aspx?id=6335>.
- Quine, W V O & Ullian, J S 1978. *The Web of Belief*. New York: Random House.
- Richardson, K A 2003. Foreword: Introducing Torrance: Wonder over the intelligibility of God in Torrance, T F, *Reality and Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation*, ix-xxi. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Root, M & Buckley, J J 2012. Introduction, in Root, M & Buckley, J J (eds), *The Morally Divided Body: Ethical Disagreement and the Disunity of the Church*, ix-x. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

- Root, M & Buckley J J (eds) 2014. *Who Do You Say That I Am?: Proclaiming and Following Jesus Today*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Schier, T n.d., *Interview with David Kelsey: David Kelsey On the Defining Goal of Theological Education in the Midst of Change*. p.1, viewed 7 January 2015 from [http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/sites/default/files/transcripts/interview/DavidKelsey\\_Theological\\_Education\\_Interview.pdf](http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/sites/default/files/transcripts/interview/DavidKelsey_Theological_Education_Interview.pdf).
- Sherman, S B 2008. *Revitalizing Theological Epistemology: Holistic Evangelical Approaches to the Knowledge of God*. OR: Pickwick Publications.
- SMU. Perkins School of Theology n.d., *Bruce D. Marshall*, viewed 18 March 2015 from <http://www.smu.edu/Perkins/FacultyAcademics/DirectoryList/Marshall>.
- Springs, J A 2010. *Toward a Generous Orthodoxy: Prospects for Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stroup, G W 1981. *Promise of Narrative Theology*. Atlanta: John Knox.
- Stroup, G W 1997. *The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Stroup, G W 2003. Reformed Identity in an Ecumenical World, in Alston, W M & Welker, M (eds), *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, 3-19. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Stroup, G W 2011. *Why Jesus Matters*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Sumner, R G 2004. *The First and the Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions*. MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Svensson, L 2014. The "Communitarian" Critique of Luther's Ethics, in Grenholm, C & Gunner, G (eds), *Lutheran Identity and Political Theology*, 172-189. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Taliaferro, C 2014. *Reviews*. Viewd 2014 Jun 30 from <http://www.polity.co.uk/book.asp?ref=9780745638683>.
- Taylor, J 2004. An Introduction to Postconservative Evangelicalism and the Rest of This Book, in Erickson, M J & Helseth, P K & Taylor, J (eds), *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, 17-32. Wheaton: Crossway.
- Taylor, K 2013. *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Question of Tragedy in the Novels of Thomas Hardy*. London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark.
- The Harvard University Gazette 1998. *Divinity Dean Stepping Down*, viewed 18 March 2015 from <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/1998/11.19/divinity.html>.
- The Official Catholic Directory 2015. *Joseph Augustine Di Noia's Biography*, viewed 17 March 2015 from <http://www.officialcatholicdirectory.com/special-feature-article/joseph-augustine-di-noias-biography.html>.
- The Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church 1999. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, viewed 26 Jan 2016 from [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_31101999\\_cath-luth-joint-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html).
- Thiemann, R F 1985. *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Thiemann, R F. 1991. *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

- Thiemann, R F. 1996. *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Thompson, D M 2014. Ecumenism and Interdenominationalism, in Lewis, D M & Pierard, R V (eds), *Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History and Culture in Regional Perspective*, 257-269. IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Torrance, T F 1998a. *Space, Time and Resurrection*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark LTD.
- Torrance, T F 1998b. *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelations of Scientific and Theological Enterprise*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Tracy, D 1985. Lindbeck's New Program for Theology: A Reflection. *The Thomist* 49:3, 460-472.
- Treier, D J 2008. *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Treier, D J 2012. Scripture and Hermeneutics, in Kopic, K M & McCormack, B L (eds), *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, 67-96. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Vanhoozer, K J (ed.) 2003. *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vanhoozer, K J 2005. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Vanhoozer, K J 2008. The Apostolic Discourse and Its Developments, in Bockmuehl, M & Torrance, A J (eds), *Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics*, 191-207. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- Van Keulen, D, 2010. Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*: Some Remarks about Unpublished Manuscripts in the Libraries of Amsterdam and Kampen. *The Bavinck Review* 1, 25-56.
- Venema, C P 2000. *The Promise of the Future*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust.
- Vidu, A 2004. Lindbeck's Scheme-Content Distinction: A Critique of the Dualism Between Orders of Language. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 9, 110-123.
- Vidu, A 2007. *Postliberal Theological Method: A Critical Study*. OR: Wipf & Stock Pub.
- Vidu, A 2009. *Theology after Neo-Pragmatism*. OR: Wipf & Stock Pub.
- Wabash College 2008, *Legend Lost: Wabash Mourns Placher*, viewed 18 March 2015 from [http://wabash.edu/news/displaystory.cfm?news\\_ID=6499](http://wabash.edu/news/displaystory.cfm?news_ID=6499).
- Weber, O 1983. *Foundations of Dogmatics, vol 2*, tr by D L Guder. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Webber, R E 2002. *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker.
- Webber, R E 2009. *Common Roots: The Original Call to an Ancient-Future Faith*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- Webster, J B 2006. *Word and Church: Essays in Church Dogmatics*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark.
- Weigel, G 1994. Re-Viewing Vatican II: An Interview with George A. Lindbeck. *First Things* 48, 44-50.
- Weigel, G 2013. *Evangelical Catholicism: Deep Reform in the 21st-Century Church*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Wells, S 2010. *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Wells, S, Quash, B, & Eklund, R 2017. *Introducing Christian Ethics*. Second edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell.
- West, C 1984. Book Reviews: The Promise of Narrative Theology. *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 141-146.
- White, J E 2006. *What is Truth?: A Comparative Study of the Positions of Cornelius Van Til, Francis Schaeffer, Carl F. H. Henry, Donald Bloesch, Millard Erickson*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Wittgenstein, L 1958. *Philosophical Investigations*, tr by G E M Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- Wycliffe College 2014. *The First and the Last*. Viewed 2014 Jul 3 from [http://www.wycliffecollege.ca/book\\_details.php?](http://www.wycliffecollege.ca/book_details.php?)
- Yeago, D S 1997. The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis, in Fowl, S E (ed), *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 87-102. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Yeago, D S 2004. The Ecclesial Context of Ecumenical Reception: A Case Study, in Braaten, C E & Jenson, R W (eds), *The Ecumenical Future*, 29-45. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.