

Christian Heritage

The foundation of the early Christian message directed from the ancient texts and creeds are built in full on the faith in Jesus Christ and the utmost being of a higher “One”. The common heritage of the churches was grounded solely on Christianity before the division of faith. This chain of tradition held together for over a thousand years before in the 16th century the division of Catholicism had occurred. The book of Daniel talks about the most important prophecy of Christ. This idea of the “son of man” regarded as the sole representation of humanity, in essence, a *Messianic* title. In *Common Roots*, by Webber, he discusses the topic of the evangelical spirit to say that it is the “inward, passionate, and zealous personal commitment to the Christian faith

that is born out of a deep conviction that faith in Jesus Christ, who died and was raised from the dead, produces life-changing effects in man and his culture” (41). Believers in the Christian faith see here that this is the innermost significance of Christianity itself, and further that it is the *good news* that provides direct importance to existence. Inside, this message contains the authority to mend the out-of-order growth between God and creation [man], human to human, man and nature, and man’s disconnection from himself. Taking a turn from a historic perspective, to understand the fulfillment of Jesus Christ and his resurrection we turn to the significance of the Jewish/Hebrew text and scriptures. From his miracle of rising from the dead, we see that life and death is fulfilled in the book of Isaiah, which marks the beginning of the Christian heritage. Jesus here becomes the *interpreting lens* so to speak, to look at the Jewish scriptures. The strongpoint to note here is that from Jesus came the growth of the gospels, followed then by the church, which then provided missions to spread the share of this good news.

When noting the importance of the growth of the Christian heritage, we must first define the theological perception the early Christians contained of the church and in addition applying this belief they contained to popular evangelicalism. The New Testament in this fulfills in opening up this heritage much through examples from the works of Paul and his letters to the church. He exemplifies words as God spoke to him, to send out a message to the church saying the good message: telling God’s wisdom on how to live [the living word of God that we abide by today]. First Corinthians discusses about the people of God in Christ, in turn by Webber to say “it takes people to worship, people to do theology, people to fulfill the mission, and people to be spiritual” (66). To first support this knowledge of the need of people within the church, is to understand that the people of the church are the people of God. God is the central creator of the creation. He is the artist behind the painting who “creates, calls, sustains, and saves them”

(Webber, 66). It is from this that we can see through the Christian heritage that the church itself lies in the direct mind of God, since we are the product of His being. It is evident in the New Testament that the church understood its unwritten importance to be this grain of importance community of God's people. With this understanding of heritage, the Jewish scriptures and the spirit indirect community of Christ both significantly support and prove that the central catalyst of Christian heritage lies with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both bear witness to Christ himself, and because he is raised, heritage begins.

The Christian heritage and its church then begin a journey of growth from its starting point from Jerusalem to Antioch. These became the two prominent centers of Christianity. The book of Galations talks about the journey and "the way" of this beginning. From this then we come to find that not only is the church set out to creating a significant population, but further one set out with goals and objectives to carry out this growth. According to Webber, the church then must be viewed in terms of the future. Several parts of the Bible refer to the idea of traveling to different destinations as a commonality. Webber states that "the image of the church as a traveling people moving toward a destination is suggested by a variety of other images in the New Testament: the church is a pilgrim people who have not yet entered into Sabbath rest [Hebrew], an exiled people [Peter], a people who are at enmity with the world [James], a people who wrestle with diabolic powers [Ephesians 6], and a bride [Revelations 19:8] (67). Webber then insists to say "in what way does an understanding of this image of the church as the people of God help set the agenda for an evangelical ecclesiology?" (67). The answer is that it sees the church as the historical people of God, thus it calls into question the ahistorical and exclusivistic attitudes characteristic of some evangelicals. Because popular evangelicalism has lost its past, it has become exclusivistic, thinking itself to be the true church alone (67). I put this small piece of

Webber's writing into this essay because I felt it poured straight significance into explaining notions and importance towards the Christian heritage. Further, throughout the New Testament, we [His creation] are continually regarded as His new creation. The implication of this representation is that a new beginning happens in Christ, and further the old was done away with, and a new time begins. The nature of this new creating is understood best when it is set in contrast to the old creation. A fundamental image of the New Testament is the presence of two sovereignties: the enemy [Satan] and the decree of Christ [Savior]. The New Testament therefore provides the knowledge that Christ is the defeater over sin and death, which then turns to be the champion over Satan. Christ established this in his rebirth, and further upon his second coming he will wipe out the works of the enemy [Satan] in full. This then becomes one of the major purposes of the Holy Bible and the Christian heritage.

The book of Acts discusses the three journeys of the spread of Christianity done by Paul and from his letters. These letters were written directly by Paul to the church. I want to quote Charles Caldwell Ryrie (Th.D and Ph.D professor of systematic Theology from Moody Press) saying: *Acts gives us the record of the spread of Christianity from the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost to Paul's arrival in Rome to preach the gospel in the world's capital. In this regard, then, it is the record of the continuation of those things which Jesus began while on earth and which he continued as the risen Head of the Church and the One who sent the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2, 2:33). The book is sometimes called the Acts of the Holy Spirit.* To say once more, Paul's missionary journeys provided major significance to the role of the church and the Christian heritage of the people, on how to live, serve, love, and love God.

Further inside the growth of the church and Christian heritage, we come to see the fall of Jerusalem. In 70 A.D. the Romans took the city by force and much of the people fled the city.

This then marked a change in history for the Christian heritage. The center of the church shifted from Jerusalem to Rome. This marked a rapid spread of Christianity inside the Gentile world. By the time of the 4th century, there were centers noted that were rapidly expanding. Four centers in the east and one in the west marked the strength and distance of the Roman Empire. Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople which is now present day Istanbul, in Turkey. The significance of mentioning the centers of the Christian heritage is to show that these contained and provided major influence on the *spread* of the heritage. Constantinople became the center of Christianity due to Constantine [Barbarian], and soon after became the capital of the Roman Empire under Byzantine rule. The variance of the east and west brought out a slight difference which would soon shape the turns of the Christian heritage for the first one thousand years. Eastern Orthodox regions believed in multiple heads as leaders, where as the Western region believed in one supreme head as lead. Christianity came and began urban at first, and was spread out through urban regions.

Acts further then demonstrates how “we are all martyrs” (Acts 1:8). From this, we are to become baptized in the spirit to become cleansed. Romans 6:1-4 discusses the meaning of Baptism. Professor Macchia boldly creates his analogy of we are in a watery tomb until the time of baptism where we are born again in a watery womb. This is where we mark the center of our lives on Christ and this further is then what rises up *in* us. We must then, turn to understand the importance of restoration and love through Christ in worship. The major importance to understand in worship is that there is a *unique relationship* between worship and the life we are living. There are several ways as Webber puts it to returning back to worship. “In the first place then we must return to worship as the corporate action of the body of Christ. Worship is not something done in from the congregation or to the congregation as though there are actions and an audience” (126). This marks the importance of

coming into reconcile with Christ through worship. We take in participation of saying “thanks” and “amen” to God, which ties us to a single unified action of worshipping the Father. Webber further says “We should also recapture the conviction of the early church that the corporate action of worship is as rehearsal of God’s plan of redemption” (127). We must note that the action of worship implies a direct positive message to God the Father. We take this act as an offering to Christ who has, as history has explained to us through the Bible, accomplished the will of the Father. Further, worship is an act for the total people attending worship, that in it they may find fullness and be given energy flowing to and from Christ in both word and atonement. It is the adoration of the entire populace of God, the church, living and non-living, for jointly they represent the body and image of Christ.

The “second step we may take is to restore the Lord’s Supper as the central and climactic point of worship. Evangelical worship represents, as we have seen, a departure from the full service of worship characteristic of the early church” (130). We must understand too that our acts of worship provide the promise that it is both everlasting and meaningful, as Christ’s love. The presence of Christ to his church, as present through His last supper, is permanent because His promise is permanent. His action is to remembered through “his body that was broken”, which is the *action* taken. It is Christ who has given his body so that we may be saved, and it is Christ who can give. Although, Christ may only give if there is someone to *receive* the love, even if the church is present, and further if the *faith itself* welcomes the word and blessings of Christ. This marks significant imagery of the Christian heritage. That Christ came, died for our sins, through Him we are saved, through worship we come and share in praise, and it is our faith that saves us.

The text and creed says that approximately 35 A.D. Jesus rose from the dead. Between 35 and 48 A.D. traditions about Jesus were collected and the apostles preached from the Old Testament as witnesses to the crucified Christ [who is raised]. Between A.D. 48 and 90 we can see the letters of Paul come into existence, and several of the Gospels of the Bible come into living. The reason then, flowing from the Old Testament to the purpose of writing the New, was to present the nature and importance in the resurrection

of Jesus and the gift of the spirit as mentioned in first Corinthians. As well, Paul's cure for the churches through his missions and letters greatly shaped the forms and attitudes needed to be taken into influence of the churches of the Christian heritage. Further, we see the need to provide a narrative foundation for the apostolic preaching and teaching about the life in Christ and in the power of the spirit. From this we find the importance of Baptism, which is the basis of the Creeds mentioned in the book of Matthew. The Christian heritage then develops the Trinity, the development of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit using God's love. This Trinitarian belief then is found connecting baptism to the rule of fate, and through the creeds.

The structure to Christian heritage in understanding descending and ascending is as follows:

God's existence and shown presence → comes in flesh to earth, where we meet with his Image [Jesus], who then dies for our sins so that we may have forgiveness. He became what we are, so that we may become what He is. → Resurrection and ascension [Glorification] of God the Father

We have come to be in relationship with God, so that we may be one with Him, in love, in spirit, and in eternity. This is the sole purpose of the Christian heritage. Through the love and presence of Jesus Christ, and through His actions we are saved.

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