

Overall, this endeavour to fill a gap in Barthian studies suggests that exploration of these more ‘pastoral’ aspects of Barth’s theology is worth further analysis. Prayer, as an essential Christian act, underwrites so much of Barth’s systematic and ethical work that those engaged in Barthian studies would do well to engage with these questions and topics.

Claire Elizabeth Hein Blanton,
University of Aberdeen



Scott MacDougall, *More than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology*, Ecclesiological Investigations 20 (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), pp. viii + 290, ISBN 978-0567659880. £70.00

This very ambitious book attempts three distinct but related tasks: first, a summary of contemporary theological reflection on the nature of the church under the heading ‘communion ecclesiology’, suggesting that there is a wide consensus that has emerged historically under particular conditions and represents a new and probably temporary stage in the wider church’s thinking; second, a critique of two influential living theologians, John Zizioulas and John Milbank, both of whom MacDougall regards as spokesmen for this consensus despite their many differences and whose work he regards as falling victim to its characteristic weaknesses; third, the presentation of a development of or alternative to (this ambiguity is something to which this review will return below) communion ecclesiology that embraces another prominent tendency in contemporary theology, a strong emphasis on a future-oriented eschatology that looks forward to the transformation of this world by the action of God at an unknown time to come (MacDougall draws on the work of Pannenberg and especially Moltmann for this).

It provides an excellent introduction to the development of ecclesiology in the last fifty or so years and is well worth reading for this purpose alone. MacDougall makes an excellent case that ecumenical

ecclesiology has been shaped by a group of ecclesiologists committed to the idea of the Church primarily as a Eucharistic community, with Roman Catholic and Orthodox proponents of this idea achieving enormous influence through the World Council of Churches (WCC), where Zizioulas was an especially prominent voice. He traces this development through internal debates within the Roman, Orthodox and Anglican traditions and into the series of WCC documents on the nature of the Church. As an Anglican himself he is sympathetic to this sacramental understanding of church but also keeps a critical distance from it in various ways. For those who would value a contextual and historical account of how current thinking on what the Church is has been shaped this chapter will provide much to reflect upon.

The more detailed analyses of Zizioulas and Milbank are likely to be of more specialised interest. Zizioulas is a key figure and may be known to many, while Milbank is highly influential within Anglicanism and beyond as the leader of Radical Orthodoxy but has never written explicitly on ecclesiology. This pair of chapters are important to the development of MacDougall's key argument, that the weaknesses of communion ecclesiology are primarily related to an inadequate (because insufficiently future-oriented) eschatology, but the working out of this in relation to these two thinkers may not be of pressing interest to all those who would like to be helped in thinking about how to conduct themselves in their service to God in his Church.

Of more general concern may well be MacDougall's positive outline of a more adequate ecclesiology based on a future hope modelled after that presented by Moltmann. To this reviewer it seems clear that these positive proposals are, to some extent, shaped by the concerns of North American churches and especially American Anglicanism, and for some that may be a factor against them. However, those of us who are outside the Anglican Communion should not assume that ideas worked out in the context of debates within it are irrelevant to us.

MacDougall's seeking for a way of imagining the Church in relation to God, to the world within which it must live out its vocation, and to the new creation for which the Christian's faith yearns, has much to recommend it. It is committed to seeing our current discipleship as born out of a living relationship to a God who has acted already to

save us while remaining oriented to a world that still needs healing and salvation. It is sensitive both to the necessity of recognising our union in Christ while allowing the working out of our different individual callings, which it does by making the full unity of the Church a matter for the future action of God. It tries to balance a sense of the calling of the Church ‘out of’ the world into a particularly close relationship to God with a sense of the Church’s calling ‘into’ the world to serve the Kingdom of God within it.

In working this out MacDougall appeals to practical theology and especially to the ‘Bass-Dykstra School’ which emphasises Christian practices as the starting point for theological reflection and this chapter might serve as a useful bridge between practical and systematic theologians since it appeals for a movement beyond what has sometimes been a polarity within recent theological conversation. MacDougall writes as a systematician welcoming convergence with practical theology, which has been something sought after since at least the beginning of the nineteenth century and is reflected in the very title of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* with its implication that theological thought is always, first, the thought of the Church, emerging from its common life in Christ.

Linked to MacDougall’s vision of a ‘Church of the basileia [kingdom] in and for the world’ is his appeal for a church accepting of difference and resistant to hierarchical imposition of homogeneity or conformity. He argues that in the time between Christ’s ministry and the realisation of the Kingdom in the future, the Church will remain fragmented and imperfect and that plurality is necessary to enable all to respond to their call in their context. To try to achieve uniformity now is to misunderstand our situation in relation to God’s purposes.

In this he seems to come close to saying that all communion ecclesiologies will constrain and distort the Church, leading to a withdrawal from or attempt to control the world (the respective fatal flaws he diagnoses in Zizioulas and Milbank). However, he pulls back from this to say merely that the missional servant dimensions he wishes to advocate are additional rather than alternative to communion as the essence of the Church. Some may feel that this is a distinctively Anglican movement and wish for a stronger emphasis on mission,

and indeed to argue for missional ecclesiology as a radically different orientation from the communion ecclesiologies. MacDougall dissects this but it is a matter for another context.

In writing this book its author has done us great service and it is to be recommended to all who would like to ask themselves searching questions about the nature of the Church as an institution and its place in God's saving work.

Nick Bridley,

Potters Bar and Brookmans Park United Reformed Churches