

FROM THE ARCHIVES
Radical Orthodoxy and the Church: A Roundtable Discussion
edited by James K.A. Smith

In September 2003 we hosted a conference at Calvin College on “Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition” which brought together representatives from both streams of thought (and some with feet in both). A number of the papers were later collected and published as *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation*, eds. James K.A. Smith and James H. Olthuis (Baker Academic, 2005). However, one piece of the conference that wasn’t reproduced in the book was a roundtable discussion about how (or whether!) RO had anything to say to the lived worship and discipleship of the church. I recently bumped into a transcript of the conversation in my files and thought it might be of interest to post it here at www.churchandpomo.org. This was not a collection of “emergent” folks, but rather some participants and local folks who were pastors, former pastors, or trained pastors for ministries in churches mainly connected to the “magisterial” Reformation. As such, it might feel a bit insider-ish to those not familiar with the Reformed tradition; but then again, that was the ecclesial focus of the conference. (One disappointment of the conference was that Robert Webber was unable to attend because of illness. Webber had interesting things to say about both Radical Orthodoxy and the emerging church in his book *The Younger Evangelicals*. Michael Horton very kindly and capably pinch-hit in Webber’s place.)

In the conversation you’ll hear critical reflections on what Radical Orthodoxy could (or should) have to say about the church. You’ll also hear Graham Ward’s demythologizing of the label “Radical Orthodoxy” and his articulation of a “big tent” sensibility in league with others. And more. All in all, an interesting snippet that perhaps makes some contribution to bringing these matters back to earth, as it were.

My thanks to Jerry Stutzman for transcribing the conversation, and Ryan Weberling for doing a final editorial clean-up.

Moderator: John Witvliet [JW], Director, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

Panelists: Scott Hoezee [SH], Calvin Christian Reformed Church (now at Calvin Theological Seminary); John Bolt [JB], Calvin Theological Seminary; David Crump [DC], Religion, Calvin College; Michael Horton [MH], Westminster Theological Seminary.

Respondent: Graham Ward [GW], University of Manchester

JW: Good morning, and welcome to this discussion session on the connection between all that we have been talking about and the life of the church. We welcome to this discussion several panelists who, in addition to being scholars and authors, are pastors. The session will proceed in this way: I will introduce our panel, and we will allow each of them to speak to the topic, followed by a response by Graham Ward. Then, we will open up the discussion for question and answer and, hopefully, have a substantial time for dialogue. We’ve had a chance to hear now many formal academic presentations, and it is important as a community that we have the time to reflect and digest on the important topic of how this academic discussion connects with the life of the church. I’ll introduce our panel and then we will proceed by simply having them speak in turn. We’ll begin with David Crump, who teaches New Testament at Calvin College and has published in the area of New Testament theology of prayer. John Bolt teaches systematic theology at Calvin Seminary and has published on Abraham Kuyper’s public theology, as well as

on Reformed worldview and Christian education. Michael Horton, from Westminster Seminary in California, has published in the area of worship and has also published a recent book on a covenantal and eschatological frame for the doing of doctrinal reflection. Scott Hoezee is pastor at Calvin Christian Reformed Church here in Grand Rapids, and his most recent book is on preaching and preaching that engages science. Following their comments, Graham Ward will respond, and we are grateful for his presence on the panel today.

DC: Thank you. It's a privilege to be here. As someone who is a bit out of his element, I come to these theology conferences here at the Institute¹ sometimes feeling like a space traveler visiting foreign worlds, where there are totally different realms of discourse. I can only imagine, since I know nothing about Radical Orthodoxy beyond what I have learned in the last day and a half, that I was invited to sit on this panel because of my known willingness to talk about things of which I am totally ignorant. However, I can make some responsive comments to what I have heard here and the conversations I've had. I really appreciate a question and answer forum such as this being put together, largely because of the sweeping claims that I gather are being made by Radical Orthodoxy. It strikes me that when the label orthodox is appropriated by a movement which, by all appearances, at least to me, could be more descriptively called Radical Christian Platonism, that there is a special responsibility to make clear how these ideas will make a tangible difference to the local church. I am not talking about the abstract church universal, but the average man and woman who sit in the pew Sunday after Sunday. Can anyone doubt that there is just the slightest touch of hubris in adopting this label Radical Orthodoxy? One of my colleagues yesterday suggested it's a bit like a modern political party, that will go unnamed, calling itself the Radical Patriot party. Anyone who does that kind of thing had better be able to demonstrate how they are best equipped to implement the vision of the founding fathers. And so my questions will revolve around that kind of concern.

First of all, as a student of Biblical studies, I would want to return to the first question I asked yesterday of Graham² in his presentation, as I am curious of the place of history in Radical Orthodoxy, and particularly the place of salvation history. I greatly appreciated Graham's candor yesterday when I asked my question about this issue, in particular how it relates to the overwhelmingly apocalyptic portrait of the coming of the Kingdom in the New Testament. I appreciated his honesty in saying that he wasn't quite sure how to answer that. I would certainly like to see something like that worked out in greater detail. My ecclesiological reason for wondering about that is that my years of pastoral experience have led me to believe that people in pain want to know about the specific, tangible applicability of the gospel message in the midst of their real-world, historical pain: when a pastor stands up and speaks to a congregation week after week and sees the woman whose husband has just left her and the teenager who has just learned that she is pregnant and the grandfather who has been just diagnosed with cancer--it's in that historical particularity that an answer has to be found. The particular historical experience of a man named Jesus, and what he has to bring to them in their specific historical circumstance, is what I would like to see teased out a bit more in some of these presentations.

Also, I secondly have a question about Radical Orthodoxy's ecclesiology. I assume on the basis of what I have heard that they would prefer some form of high church Anglo-

¹ [Crump is referring to the Seminars in Christian Scholarship program at Calvin College, directed at the time by James K.A. Smith. -ed.]

² [Ward's contribution was published as "Barth, Hegel, and the Possibility for Christian Apologetics," in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, pp. 43-60. -ed.]

Catholicism complete with all the sacramentalism that that would entail. It makes me wonder how they would interact with the traditional Reformed teaching of the priesthood of all believers. Where is authority for leadership in the church resident? What does ecclesiastical authority look like? How centralized is it? What is the proper polity for church decision making on the ground level? Personally, I am extremely leery of any theology that elevates the Eucharist to the place of primacy in church life, particularly when this move is justified by the language of participation. In reading the New Testament, I find it curious to observe that the Eucharist has a very minor role to play in the complete litany of passages where participatory language occurs in the Apostle Paul's writings. From his perspective, participation is primarily a Christological category which is a function again of salvation history, and I wonder how it could be adequately dealt with apart from a very rigorous engagement with history in the Christian life. This leads me to another concern here in ecclesiology: I wonder what place Bible study among the people of God has to play in such a highly sacramental view of church life. The importance of this particular question was highlighted for me dramatically last night when we heard that the Bible, after all, is just a book. This seems to me far too convenient and self-serving. We cannot rid ourselves of the pesky constraints of Scripture quite that easily, and this is a point, as a Biblical scholar, at which I am continually irritated by conferences such as this--where it strikes me that the pressures for validating a system or some presumed metaphysics bowl over the text willy-nilly whenever its convenient. I would like to see a bit more disciplined engagement in submitting oneself to the authority of God's word.

And finally, I wonder what kind of role Radical Orthodoxy would allow for a theology of mission in the life of daily discipleship. Once again, to my mind, a proper understanding of mission is a function of one's view of salvation history. So Paul, for example, twice in the book of Romans, in chapter one and chapter fifteen, states that his most thoroughgoing expression of worship, of liturgical service, occurs in his proclamation of the gospel to the Gentile. I wondered if Radical Orthodoxy's sacramentalism could be adequately hospitable to a fully robust view of the missional responsibilities of the church and whether that could live with their high view of sacramentalism. As you can see, I have a lot more questions than I do anything else, but I look forward to some discussion on these things.

JB: There is what I would call something Athanasian³ about Radical Orthodoxy. Like that of the old saint, it is theology with an attitude; I like it. Think of it, facing a dominantly Hellenistic worldview in which the incarnation was not only intellectually absurd but also spiritually repugnant, and with all the political intrigue and power on the side of the Hellenizing Arians, who after Constantine's death enjoyed the favor of the imperial court, Athanasius held firm to his Barthian line, even to the point of a seven-fold exile: the gospel is true, the incarnation is real, so therefore the regnant worldview in which the eternal and the temporal, and the spiritual and the material, are incommensurate realities that cannot possibly be joined is simply wrong. Period. Case closed. That's theology with an attitude, and what makes RO so intriguing and refreshing is that it is a wonderful counterexample to modern theology's lack of attitude. William Abraham, in an essay on contemporary theology, put it this way: "Modern theologians are so worried about being kicked in the ditch by the modern world that they hastily jump into it to avoid this fate." It is to RO's credit that it refuses to jump, though, like all of us, it may occasionally stumble and fall in. That this theology with attitude is so strongly and strangely, in large measure, an Anglican phenomenon is also kind of special, particularly in view

³ [Bolt is referring to the church father, Athanasius.]

Anglicanism's "spongy" ability in recent years to absorb the worst intellectual excesses of modern anti-Christian hubris.

Now, what would it mean for the North American church to begin to adopt some attitude? How does it extricate itself from its own particular captivity to its culture? I was pleased to hear Graham Ward's critique of Barth on Thursday evening as a reminder that there is no pure theology, no theology that is not embedded in the cultural forms and passions of its own day. I take it that we must make choices between conflicting visions of the good. We must discern what is God's will for us in the grave issues of the day. My question is whether we don't in fact often find ourselves in situations where two opposing directions tug at our loyalties, both in the name of attitude. Or, to state it differently in the name of being counter-culturally prophetic: it's two days after the anniversary of 9/11--consider war on terrorism. I would judge that a straight-forward, American civil-religious identification of Bush administration policy with the eschatological goals of the kingdom of God is idolatry, of course. But is it obvious that radical opposition to the American liberation of Iraq as the first step toward eradicating world terrorism is an imperative for the church? In Grand Rapids, one progressive congregation has blanketed our community with blue and white "wage peace" signs and has been a vocal presence of opposition in our community. The question I have is, does my Christian faith obligate me to join that chorus? My sense from John Milbank's asides yesterday, and again this morning, is that he does think so. I am far less sure. I hold out, for example, the outrageous possibility that Prime Minister Blair might be the Athanasian, or I would prefer Tertullian, parallel, standing against a whole world of Chamberlain-ing [?] appeasement to radical evil. My point here is this: though I appreciate RO's passion to restore theology to prominence by taking culture and politics seriously as proper objects for theological reflection, recognizing that theology is never pure means prudential and modest political and cultural judgments are called for. And I have a sense sometimes that what we are doing is letting prior political commitments and engagements determine our theological readings.

Now, I am going to startle my Reformed and especially Kuyperian reformational friends by suggesting that one thing we need to take up as a challenge from RO is its love for neo-Platonism. As a student of H. Evan Runner, and as one trained in the theological tradition that included G. C. Berkouwer, I grew up with two very philosophical biases against Neo-Platonism, on the one hand, and against the Neo-Aristotelianism of the seventeenth-century Protestant Scholastics, on the other. In the case of the latter, I regret the period of my own theological career in which I wasted so much time protesting a whole range of important and useful theological distinctions as so much scholastic dualism. Thanks to the effective ministrations of my friend and colleague Richard Muller, I am cured from this disease. In the case of Neo-Platonism, however, while I understand and passionately want to maintain a clear creator/creature boundary against all metaphysical hierarchies of being that obliterate it, RO, along with my own renewed interest in Jonathan Edwards, has forced me to take a second look at the Neo-Platonist impulse.

Briefly, why I think it is important for the church, in two words: theological aesthetics. The Reformed tradition has a high doctrine of creation, and though Calvin used the language of the world being "the theatre of God's glory" and Jonathan Edwards developed an amazing typology of redemption from created things like spiders, Reformed popular piety does not think in terms of creation analogy, beauty, delight. Reformed people will sing "this is my Father's world," but not enough live daily with the echo of Gerald Manley Hopkins that "the world is filled with the grandeur of God." At the same time, our doctrine of creation does occasionally

become a rationalization for our worldliness. We have far too much materiality and too much of the sense that we are only body, and it arises in many cases out of our Reformed convictions about creation. We get so wrapped up in kingdom activity that Calvin's observations about the far better world that awaits us make us very nervous. Unbiblical Platonism, we say. I submit that a proper theological aesthetic would open us up to more delight, more this-worldly joy, more imagination, more love of language, art, music, and beauty, while also directing us beyond what is squalid, sordid, and sinful.

One other theme in RO that should resonate with Reformed people is embodiment. Graham Ward's *Cities of God*⁴ presents us with fascinating, though sometimes frustrating, reflections on the material aspirations of modern urban life. There are numerous challenging ideas in the *Cities of God*, such as the claim that "corporeality has to be read spiritually, that is allegorically." Those of us raised on a Calvinian plain-sense reading of Scripture, and on Calvin's contention that Origen's allegories are from Satan, will get nervous here. But listen on [reading from *Cities of God*]: "allegorical reading disciplines the naming and therefore the identification of the material world, deception is the structure of evil where a name and an appearance coalesce. Positivism is therefore evil. Materiality embodiment, all on its own, apart from God, named apart from theological reflection, is idolatry, mere self-gratification." If Calvin were a Pentecostal, he would say "amen," but then I lose the argument when Ward concludes from this that churches should bless same-sex unions. His discussion in the seventh chapter is provocative, particularly the section in which he deals with Barth's view of gender difference, and so on. So is the claim that there is no such thing as homosexuality, only narcissism, from which he concludes that God-ordained desire can only be heterosexual, and from that yields the startling conclusion that "there can be self-designated heterosexual relationships whose structure of desire is homosexual and so-called homosexual relationships whose structure of desire is heterosexual." I find that indeed instructive and pastorally very helpful, but does the call to bless same-sex unions follow, or is it rather a gnostic failure of Christian theology of embodiment, and to return to my opening theme, an accommodation to contemporary culture. Here I quote the one sentence from Ward's book I fully endorse: "but I am now proceeding too quickly."

Finally, Reformed Christianity always holds preaching as central. Here RO does not help us, I am afraid, and I don't want to hear any comments about my preaching, but I have no idea how to bring *The Word Made Strange*⁵ into the pulpit of my Christian Reformed Church, and I am not going to try.

MH: Having jumped onto this panel here in the ninth inning, my thoughts are going to be considerably more scattered than those of my distinguished predecessor. I, first of all, am very honored to be a part of this conversation, especially to see how these discussions relate to our lives in the world and in the church. Just a couple of comments, and since I have just arrived this morning, I can't comment on anything except for what I've read from the RO circle and on more general reflections that they have helped me to raise in my own mind.

First of all, the connection that has already been noted between biblical and systematic theology: often in systematic theology, at least as it is done in the mainline academy, it seems that if one has to choose between philosophical paradigms and exegesis, one often goes for the philosophical paradigms. This is a huge generalization, but there does seem to be that tendency.

⁴ [Graham Ward, *Cities of God*, Radical Orthodoxy (Routledge, 2000). –ed.]

⁵ [John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Blackwell, 1997). –ed.]

I think that when we are writing systematic theology we think sometimes that we really have to get all the philosophical stuff under our belt, but we don't have to get the exegesis under our belt. It doesn't deserve the same level of imagination, attention, and exertion. That is a bone to throw to the Biblical theologians. But I think also that the Biblical theologians, and Old Testament and New Testament scholars, also often do not sufficiently appreciate the importance of attending to the ways in which we formulate and connect the conclusions of exegesis in their various relations, which is what systematic theology does and, in that respect, has to call on philosophy for a little bit of kindred help.

Also for theory and practice, in *Theology and Social Theory*, I think Professor Milbank has especially rendered us a great service in offering a critique. I'm not sure that there is a sufficient answer as he presents his way forward in *The Word Made Strange*. I'm not sure I can go along with the critique of the culture. I have learned and admire a great deal from him. I think that one way to think about these islands that are moving apart is to think again about our Christology--the two natures in one person, the reality of the two natures that remained the two natures, the divinity of the Calvinist *kai pax* transcending the humanity but being united with the humanity. One concern that I have is that, in terms of Christology, we see two tendencies (we see a lot more tendencies than this, but in connection to this): Arian liberalism, on one hand, where Christ is reduced to merely a person and so there is a secularization of religion--I think of the death of God movement as the radical version of that, Harvey Cox, secularization is actually what the kingdom of God should be after--and then, on the other hand, the violence of an Apollonian Christology, which seeks to justify everything in the world according to its participation in God. We see that, for instance, sometimes in the way that Athanasius talks about Jesus being successful in his mission because the *logos* was driving him as we might drive a car. What of his humanity? Wasn't his humanity salvific as the second Adam, as the new Israel, as the successful man who takes Adam's place? So I see violence on both ends, either to secularize Christianity, to bring it more in line with the culture, or to spiritualize the culture, to see the culture only as bearing meaning for God if it is bearing redemptive meaning. And here I think we would invoke our distinction between common grace and saving grace, as has been done.

Word and sacrament--here again I find myself nodding at many of the critiques but also nodding when RO encourages us to take the Eucharist more seriously as a site of divine presence. I think in too many of our Reformed churches we hold in principle a theology that we don't hold in practice. We embrace Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper perhaps on paper and then practice the real absence. I would disagree with our first speaker in the role of the Eucharist in the life of the community of God. It's of fundamental importance. I agree with Calvin that it has the same office as the Word of God, and I think that we can learn a lot, at least about the significance of this as a category, in our reflection.

The already and not-yet is a concern that I have, and this is what we struggle with in our vocations. It's what we struggle with as Christians. It's what doctors and homemakers and lawyers and Christians who are serving in a variety of callings find themselves in conflict over. How much of the kingdom is here and how much of it yet awaits us? And here I would caution against quickly embracing a Platonic two-worlds approach to that question in favor of a Pauline two-ages approach to that question. We are not looking for another world. This world is not noble because it participates in another world; it's noble because God made it as a different world. Even after the fall, it's going to be redeemed not as another world but as another age of this world, an age under God's reign of justice and shalom.

Last point: covenant, renewal, liturgy, and drama. Aren't you glad that I didn't write out a text? I have already gone on too long with these bullet points. Covenant, renewal, liturgy, and drama--this is where there is some overlap with RO. It was certainly the view of Calvin, and the Reformers generally, as with the historic church, that it is in the worship service itself that we are not only instructed on how to become Christians, know the right doctrines and follow the right practices, but that we are actually scripted in that role; the liturgy actually does it to us, or I should say that God does it by his Spirit in Christ through the mediation of word and sacrament. I think that is one of the reasons why at least in Evangelical circles today, and in some of our Reformed circles as well, there is such a clamor for more drama and a movement away from preaching. Sacrament is perhaps the result of our own failure in Reformed practice often to see the worship service itself as a drama in which the Spirit acts out, actually acts out, actually effects the world that is described in the Scriptures.

SH: Like David, who spoke first, probably about as good and probably also about as telling a place as any for me to begin in pondering the potential effect of RO on the church would be simply to observe that, in preparing for this conference, and now in attending sessions the last two days, I as a pastor of a church have had a decided sense of being well over my head. We've probably all had this experience at one time or another, but there are those times when all the world seems like a tuxedo and you're a pair of brown shoes. But as somebody who spends most of his weeks trying to find accessible language and apt analogies by which to explain God's providence to steelworkers and retired grandmothers, getting immersed in jargon that parses proportionality and analogical predications of divine attributes or the social semiotics of textuality and signification is--well, it's a change of pace for me. It strikes me that pondering what effect now or in the future RO could have on churches could well begin with the suggestion that this new school of thought is unlikely to have much of an effect on the church until or unless pastors like myself can access this thought in ways that will help reveal its relevance, or at least help us to decide whether or not it is relevant in the first place. That is one of the things that Jamie Smith said that we want to see--can this trickle down to the church?--and so he wanted a pastor up here, and I am thinking that we're going to need some translation here.

So anyway, having now impeached my credibility to discuss RO with the technical precision it deserves, maybe what I can contribute is just some subjects phrased in the interrogative mood, asking some questions both for the sake of this discussion and maybe for the sake of advancing an agenda for the future. But my first question does emerge from what I just said, and that is, how do the framers of RO envision their works in their present form reaching pastors and parishioners of average Christian congregations? How should, or would, pastors and lay leaders of the church read these materials? Is it thought that non-specialists in postmodern philosophical thought can dive into these deep and often heavy waters, or is there an already recognized need for translation? And if so, from what corners would this translation come? Is there any hint what form it would take? But of course, it needs to be said, though it is doubtless obvious even without saying it, that we cannot refer to the church or the average congregation as though any such thing existed as a monolith.

I must confess that in reading some materials related to this conference, as well as supporting articles that give a bird's eye view of RO, I found some items that were not all that radical to me. In my congregation, we call some of this just orthodoxy. According to a summary by R. R. Reno that Jamie Smith put into my hands, one of RO's traits has been the

rejection of the compartmentalization of the Christian faith away from the rest of the world with the result that Christians are permitted to do little more than share values off in some dark corner, away from the light of the public square. Reno observes that RO abhors this in favor of letting the whole world be absorbed into a theological framework, such that Christian theology becomes the way that we talk about everything. Again, however, for the Reformed Christians I know in this neck of the theological woods, such a broad ranging Kuyperian world- and life-view has been *de rigueur*, for a very long time. Heck, my inaugural sermon at Calvin Church ten years ago this month was titled, "How We See Things." And in that sermon, I suggested that if sermons and worship services generally were to do anyone any good, then those messages would need to grind an ever more theological lens through which we would view the world the other six days of the week. Faith is how we see things--all things. All of which is to say that what may be radical and cutting edge, ought cuisine in one part of the wider church may well be familiar spiritual comfort food in another.

But while I am talking about the church in this neck of the woods anyway, let me note a few items I picked up on that would give people pause, the people I know. In fact, some of these things would give slightly more than pause; they would lead to a rejection of RO and a grave suspicion about trying to weave it into the life of the church, at least the churches with which I am familiar. It seems to me that, if RO is going to have a shaping influence on churches, it will need not only to be translated into language that pastors can grasp and utilize, but it may also need to meet the church where it is. As for the average person at a lot of churches in Grand Rapids, or at Calvin Church, and what church means to them, I would imagine--actually I would hope--that they would talk about items such as the importance of worship, the vital place of prayer, and the central place of God's word, which is for us the main part of that theological lens through which we view all of life. And last, but not least, they would maybe even mention the preaching that helps to elucidate and focus that divine word by applying it to the times in which we live.

So a final question I have to ask is whether or to what degree the architects of RO have engaged matters engaged to worship, to prayer, to Scripture itself. Certainly a lot of attention has been devoted to the Eucharist--and given RO's works with the signs and signification, the Eucharist is a natural locus of attention--but what about the rest of church life? Years ago when Hans Kung wrote his magnum opus, the pretentiously titled *On Being a Christian*, a friend of mine observed that having gone on and on for over eight hundred pages on the nature of being a Christian, Kung never once mentioned prayer. The word was not even in the book's massive index. Now, seeing as prayer has occupied a, shall we say, prominent place in the life of worshipping communities for a couple of millennia now, prayer's absence from Kung's work was at once absurd and telling. And so I ask, what do the indices of RO look like? What do they contain, and what direction do they point? Do they point toward the church as a worshipping community of faith, word, sacrament and prayer, or in some other direction? In working through some of Graham Ward's *Cities of God* (when I wrote this paragraph, I really didn't picture you sitting right next to me, but anyway, on we go), when reading through the book (and I haven't finished it yet), I did notice a curious contrast between chapters five and six. In the former chapter, readers are given a vivid tour of a sex shop, replete with language and imagery I would not repeat here and have not typically encountered in theological works, John Updike notwithstanding. But chapter six then turns more directly towards the church, and yet I didn't find the same level of vivid attention to detail in the description of the institutional church in its practices as had occurred in a very different venue the chapter prior. Now, because I

haven't read that entire work, much less all the other works in this field, I cannot deny that what I am inquiring about may well be fruitfully addressed elsewhere. If so, then those would be the points of contact that would be key, in terms of hooking RO into the church, or again, at least in terms of the churches with which I am most familiar. And so I will simply state the question again and quit: is RO looking at and talking about matters related to the worship life of the church in ways that will expand the horizons of Scripture's place in worship, prayer's role in the life of the community, and so in these ways addressing also the realities with which pastors have to do every day in the course of their shepherding work?

GW: When I was listening to the four of you, I actually thought that you have a lot to talk about amongst yourselves. I am going to try to answer some of the questions related to each of the presentations, and some will overlap with what I say, particularly with things I want to say to David and Scott that may involve going over the same kind of ground.

Let me start, though, with an anecdote about how RO got its name. It sounds like a Rudyard Kipling story, but it is really kind of revealing. For a long time--and this opened up for me the whole horizon of cultural politics and marketing--the phenomenal success, in terms of normal theological book sales of RO, is entrenched not in just what it says but in how it has been marketed, and in fact, John, Catherine, and I have had no dealings in how it has been marketed. For a long time, that first volume of essays which launched it all was in fact called "Suspending the Material"; it had no other title than that, and John and I had been commissioned by Routledge to begin a book series for which we had no title whatsoever. The main idea behind it was that what we wanted to do was to reflect a new trend in theological thinking that was anti-liberal and anti- the kind of Spong mentality. In other words, what we wanted to do was to reflect some of the theology that was actually coming out from not questioning the Christian faith but actually being embedded within the Christian faith and trying as far as possible to live out its truths. So we were not trying to ask about whether, in fact, Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary, and question that. That was part of the grammar of faith from which we began, and in that, we looked around, and there were people like Stanley Hauerwas and Rowan Williams and Fergus Kerr who were doing exactly the same. They were speaking out of the tradition unapologetically to the world in which we lived. That was all we wanted to do. We wanted to speak from the position of believing Christians and responding to the world around us. So we sat down very close to the signing of the contracts--and very close to the proofs coming out of the collection of essays that came together simply by bringing a number of people who we thought were all on the same kind of wavelength in and around Cambridge, and one or two friends from the States--we sat down and asked, if you had to deal with certain questions, how would you deal with them from a Christian faith? We got those papers together, and as I said, it was called "Suspending the Material." And I think, had the book gone out under the title "Suspending the Material," I wouldn't be here today, and a lot of this kind of attention to something called "Radical Orthodoxy" would never have manifested itself.

Eventually, the publisher came to see John and myself, and Catherine was brought in, because she was a very close colleague of John's, being John's student at one time. We sat down with the marketing person from Routledge, and he said, "OK, this title is not going to work. We've got to think of a better title." We still hadn't found a title for the series. "So what is this about", he was saying, and we said, "The Christian faith." "Well that's not going to work, that's not going to work at all. That's not going to sell anything as a book series. OK, think of something else." "Well its about orthodox beliefs in the Christian faith." "Orthodox, now

there's a good word: orthodox." And then I think Catherine said--there is a whole kind of confusion at this point about who said what--but I think Catherine said, "Oh, John, in one of your articles once you talked about 'towards a new orthodoxy,' what about 'new orthodoxy.'" And I think that I chimed in at that point and said, "Wait a minute, that's called an oxymoron: new orthodoxy. What's going on here?" And anyways, the Routledge publishers immediately jumped and said, "New orthodoxy, that's just not going to work. We need something far more radical than that." That's where it came from. They decided then that "suspending the material" had to be the subtitle. In fact, I think that "suspending the material" disappeared; at one time, the subtitle was "suspending the material", and the series was called *Radical Orthodoxy*, and they decided they wanted RO on the front cover because they thought that would sell, and they were obviously right in that way, and so it was called *Radical Orthodoxy: Suspending the Material*. And that was how it was until we got the galley proofs for the actual book itself. It had gone to press and the galley proofs said *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, and none of us had actually made that--kind of, it's out of your hands, it comes down to cultural politics. Of course, we could have kicked a fuss up and everything else, but by that time you're just wanting to get the thing off the table and actually printed. So just about the label, so to follow from that because as it started to then get lots of publicity, I used to get two or three e-mails a week saying "Can you tell me where your local branch is, and how I subscribe?" I used to telephone John, and I said, "This is really frightening John. This is a book series, it's not a sect." It started to get very confusing.

Now I hold nothing by the title RO. Sometimes when I am asked to justify it, I will say, "As far as I'm concerned, what's radical about it is its socialism, because I'm a socialist." But it never came from being associated with socialism at all, that is to say that it was a purely serendipitous occasion made by the Routledge publisher. So I don't hold much in trying to unfold that. If anything, it is for me a certain kind of sensibility that comes from people within a broadly catholic, Anglo-Catholic persuasion, who are just looking at the world through their own lenses, and that's about all. I don't then see it as some kind of program. I was slightly confused in seeing the Reformed tradition and Radical Orthodoxy together as if they were two distinct traditions of Christian thinking all together, which I think is just not so. I mean, I think that if I am brutally honest, in ten years time, probably less, this series will fold, another series will come along, and I don't know what will happen then to something called RO. It's often said, "well they have a program in which they want to do various things in various areas." When John and I get together we talk about cricket, we talk about British politics, and we talk about where the nearest pub is. We don't talk theology with each other. Very rarely do we talk theology with each other.

OK, now let me just come to some of the specifics of the questions that you asked. Let me just go to David, and David, I put that radical fix there just because at the beginning of the thing, it seemed to me that you're asking a question about--and this also comes out in Scott's comments--what is the role of the academic theologian? I think that this is a real problem, and those of us in academic theology, particularly those of us like myself, who are also priests, find the tension here really quite difficult to cope with. I was a parish priest to begin with, I moved then to being a chaplain, I moved then to being a dean, and in all those jobs, I held an academic position and a pastoral position at the same time. And the tension between the two, not in terms of one making sense of the other, but simply in terms of a division of labor, just became too much, and so I eventually had to decide which way I was actually going to jump--not to decide just on my own, as it's a process of discernment--but to decide which is the direction for the

vocation that I was actually following. It is a problem, because it is an institutionalized problem. John, Catherine, myself, and a number of others are all members of worshipping communities. Some of those, like myself, actually are ministers within worshipping communities on a voluntary basis. I do as much preaching as I do lecturing. But, there is an institutional problem in the way that the academy--and I don't know whether this is the same in the States--but in the way the academy is separated from the practice of church life, such that this is one of the first forums in which I have sat with four people who are actually full-time practicing pastors of churches and in which the academic institution can fully start to talk with the pastoral church. It just doesn't happen. There are not forums for that, and that is a certain kind of historical development. I think increasingly, whether you want to trickle down RO's sentiments, or whatever, that we do need to find ways in which we bring together the thinking-through at an academic level of theology with the practicing of the faith that goes on in the church, because it has no rationale whatsoever as simply a game of concepts. It only has a rationale if it is seen in relation to practices of piety that are going on within the community. So when it is separated from that--and in my academic job, I just feel that separation constantly--it's only by finding forums for bringing those two things together that there can be a fruitful understanding of what I see as essential. Academic theology is one form of doing theology. There is preaching, there are various liturgical practices, there is a kind of action by Christians following out their faith, and are all to me discursive forms of theology. They are all embedded, working-out modes of doing theology. They are all expressions, that is, of what it is to be a Christian and to believe. And so what needs to happen is seeing, right now, where does this more abstract, rarefied vocabulary meet with the actual church itself. Until we find forums for that, that's a genuine question I have no answer to at the moment.

My question to David, and I have two questions, particularly regarding his call about where is the authority in the church. I want to know, do you recognize the validity and integrity of different traditions, and, therefore, that they have different modes of finding authority? Within the Anglican Church, for instance, authority lies with the reading of Scripture in terms of daily practice. As far as I know, that is something that is within Catholicism and in Anglicanism. And in Anglicanism, there is also the Bishop--but the Bishop is not in any way a pope, and neither is the archbishop in any way a pope--and the individual in the process of discernment with respect to the church and to Scripture. That's the model for that kind of authority, and there it is not the same kind of model that goes on in within Congregational churches which seem to me, and I may be wrong here, to focus very much more on what Durkheim would call the charismatic, or the charisma of a certain kind of figure at the center. It's a different form of authority from the Catholic Church, which is much more hierarchical than, say, the Anglican Church. But there are different forms of church living and different forms of worshipping communities, with different forms of authority, that wrestle always with that question of authority. There has to be a recognition, it seems to me, of the validity and integrity of different traditions, because they are there, and part of what we are doing today is negotiating some of that, being ecumenical, if you like, and being ecumenical without trying to find some middle pablum that we can all try and throw ourselves into, but actually wanting to hold onto our formation and our tradition. The only way we can do that is by my recognizing that the Reformed tradition has an integrity and a validity of its own that I want to discuss and negotiate with, but I too have a validity and an integrity of my own within my tradition that you need to actually recognize. I can't see how in fact just slamming one is going to actually help at all.

The other thing, and this may be a slip of tongue on both David's point and Scott's point, is that I find it really difficult when people talk about the authority of God's word. And I'll just say why: the Bible is not God's word; if the Bible were God's word, it would make the Bible the fourth person in the Trinity. The Bible attests to the Word of God and the Bible is a vehicle for special revelation about the Word of God, because of the way it is the only vehicle for attesting to the incarnation of Christ in that period of history. But you have to make a distinction between the Bible and the Word of God. For me, in my tradition, to align the two would be to hypostasize the Bible in a way that you become a prisoner of a certain kind of set of words. That the Bible is absolutely important and I suppose, given the fact that I spend a lot of time doing exegesis both in preaching and in the writing that I do, that I have a slightly different view of this than John and the role of the Bible that he was mentioning last night. But I would still insist on a number of long scholars, among who would be Reformed people like Karl Barth, for instance, that in fact there is no unmediated access to God's Word through Scripture. There is always a point of mediation. There is always a hermeneutics, and there has always got to be a critical reflection upon those hermeneutics and upon the question of what is being legitimized by saying that God's authority in the Bible legitimizes this.

John, I didn't have the same kind of difficulty. I know that we could talk endlessly about same-sex unions, and it is a problem that will not go away and that the church will have to wrestle with. It seems to me that the theologian has to wrestle with those questions that the church throws up, in terms particularly of my own church, of practices of ordaining gay people and of asking, therefore, in the acknowledgement of gay people, are we then requiring celibacy from these gay people? It seems to me that what I was arguing for in the *Cities of God* was the celebration of relation, and I am not asking, and I don't want to ask, that we have marriage for same-sex couples. I think that marriage is something different, entirely different in terms of the church's sacrament. But if we are going to acknowledge that these people have an integrity--and I recognize that some people would say that they have no integrity at all, but for me they do have an integrity--then I want to find ways in which the church celebrates that integrity. That was all I was actually trying to move towards. I may not have got it all right there. Let me just make a note, though, about the liberation of Latin American people. I am no pacifist, not at all, and I think that there is a time and a place for war, and in fact the Christian tradition has a long reflection on the nature of just war and when is a war just. Not that there is any consensus on that but it has always got to be a determining process. I don't want to talk about the liberation of Iraq or Blair, because I think that that would entrench us. I think that it is a very fruitful discussion but it would actually take up more time than I think that we have actually got.

Michael, the comment that I just wondered about really is, as far as I know, I am not a Platonist--well, I am Augustinian, in so far as Augustine is always lumped with the Platonists. Actually, Augustine was also profoundly influenced by Aristotelianism, as well as, in fact, were others--Gregory of Nyssa, John of Damascus--all of them were influenced by Aristotelian concreteness. Catherine, if you like, is the one who is the great champion of Plato, and in fact, Catherine's reading of Plato is radically against the two-worlds Platonic vision. What she wants to see is a kind of embryonic, incarnational vision within Plato, as if, if you like, the incarnation is proleptically picked up in some ways by Plato. I don't know about that; Catherine and I have different emphases on that. I think that one of the things that you picked up on, which I think sometimes can get lost, is that, yes, there is an emphasis upon the Eucharist in RO, but the whole point about the emphasis on the Eucharist is for one thing only: it is the emphasis upon Christology. And it's Christology not done in the abstract but done in the liturgical concreteness

of church worship. That's why I go and why, I am sure, the others go to the Eucharist. It's not to reify the Eucharist itself but to see the Eucharist as the site at which you can understand the operational incarnation and Christology better. There would be other sites--Scriptures would be another site--but the Eucharist is the site, coming from my tradition, that we tend to look to.

I'm really looking at the clock and thinking that I will mention a problem very briefly to Scott, because it is the same kind of problem that I mentioned with David: there is a need for translation. I'm not worried whether it is a translation of RO's ideas or of any ideas. There is a need for translation between academic theology and the church, such that the Church can say, "that's rubbish, you're talking up the wall," and on the other hand, the academic theologian can say, "look, you've got practices here that in no way relate to or fulfill what in fact is the faith." So it is a two-way dialogue, but there are no forums for that dialogue that I know of. Unless we get those forums together, we are going to come across this question all the time, and theologians like me can actually end up in front of our computer screens spinning webs for the church which have no reality, whatsoever, in real congregations.

JW: Actually, it strikes me that the various topics that have been identified in the last hour could themselves be the basis for quite a book and quite an exchange. I would like to suggest that we could profitably have a lot of exchange among the panel. We want to make sure there is an opportunity here for questions, perhaps from some of you who've come to the conference with a question that best fits in this session. But if I may, I ask those of you who have questions to address them to a particular panelist. If you would come to the microphone, it helps us with the recording of this session.

Q1: I guess this question could relate to any of the pastors on the panel who feel this may be relevant. One way in which I think that RO may be relevant to common congregations is just a movement which you see happening among lay people in the U. S.--earlier it was Evangelicals converting to Roman Catholicism. I actually grew up in a place in Kansas which is largely a Mennonite community, and there has been a big movement of Evangelicals converting to Eastern Orthodoxy. In fact, I think that the Eastern Orthodox church is the fastest growing church in the United States. Some of it is that there are lay people who feel that Evangelical Christianity has been overly suspicious of certain aspects of the Christian tradition, particularly even some of the Platonic aspects which folks like Milbank and Pickstock try and give a very sympathetic read to, as far as retrieval. And then another popular-level movement--at least, I read it as a popular-level movement--is the Openness of God movement, which has developed in popular literature, at least through popular presses, if not as much through certain academic theologians. I think that it also expresses some of the sentiment of where you can go if you move a long ways away from the church fathers. I would see Evangelical movements toward Eastern Orthodoxy or more high church traditions as a sort of countermovement to this Openness of God movement, which is in some ways opposite, I think, to RO as a scholastic movement defending the value of the neo-Platonic framework, the "Openness of God" movement being a popular movement attacking that. Perhaps things in Michigan and Grand Rapids are so rooted in a Reformed tradition that it's insular to these sorts of influences, I don't know, but I wondered if any of you had reflections on that. You can even see similar movements in Thomas Oden, wanting to give a definition of Evangelical that is more doctrinal and more appreciative to the church fathers.

JB: That was the one example that came to my mind immediately, not only Oden's three volumes but the commentary series. More generally, a revival of interest in the church fathers and in the tradition and in a number of evangelical systematic theologies, for example, in the last dozen years or so--that's been a development that would confirm that. But the one person who was going to be here and isn't, Bob Webber,--didn't Bob Webber write a book number of years ago, *The Road to Canterbury*? It's Anglican, it's Roman Catholic, and it's Orthodox – it reflects precisely that kind of desire for more rootedness in the Christian tradition.

SH: It strikes me that from generation to generation, the next generation of the church looks for new ways to renew itself. I think a lot of that has to do with the parental baggage that we all carry as human beings. We are looking for ways to be unlike our parents in many ways, or to find our own mode of expression, our own appropriation of the faith. That manifests itself in a wide variety of different formats, so that at the same time there are people moving towards an Orthodoxy, embracing Eastern Orthodoxy, you see simultaneously the growth of the seeker church movement that some people here might think anathema but that goes in totally opposite directions and yet equally valid expressions of a new generation trying to find their own particular expression for the faith. I think that is at least a part of it. Let me just add a tag to that: I have no problem at all with embracing a wide variety of church traditions. I think that's a healthy and good and valuable thing. My question was just one of curiosity as to where RO might lead, and particularly, I am very happy that Graham offered the explanation he did of how it came to get its name, because my fear was in fact just the opposite, that perhaps RO, with that title, might become the exclusionary school. So I am very glad to hear this and to make sure that that was clear.

Q2: My question is for Graham. You asked for a recognition of your tradition and you also spoke about looking for kindred spirits, if you will, when you were looking for authors who would be writing different texts for the RO series. Do you recognize kindred spirits outside of Anglo-Catholic and Catholic tradition? Do you look at people like Hauerwas or Yoder, or do you look at folks like Tom Oden, actually, although he's politically quite conservative? Do you look at people like that and recognize them as kindred spirits or, if not, are there others who you say, "Yeah, they are kind of doing the same thing we are, but in a different way."

GW: Yeah, let me just say that we had the big debate with Stanley. Stanley was one of the people we wanted to write for us at one point, and we announced to Stanley, "Stanley, we got this new series called *Radical Orthodoxy*, and we'd like you to consider publishing a volume with us." And Stanley, in his Texan drawl--anyone who knows Stanley will know the drawl--and I will leave out most of the language, but Stanley just went berserk because he had just started something called *Radical Traditions*, and what was I doing setting up a series against his book series. We would recognize, in so far as you need, in the publishing world, it's a matter of a coherent book series, so you are looking at a certain sensibility. Having said that, though--I don't know whether Jamie is here--I remember there was some discussion about Jamie's book in the series, because Jamie is critical of aspects of my work and John's work and Catherine's work. The publisher said, "Well, he takes you to task at some points," and I said, "Overall, I think that the sensibility is right, and if we cannot be taken to task within our own book series, then there is something really kind of closed about what we are doing." And if it seems, and I am not sure that it does, that it's of a certain kind of churchmanship, churchwomanship, or you

know, church-churchiness that seems to get the limelight in RO, then that is only because it displays that kind of sentiment that gives a coherence to that. Often when I am asked, "What is Radical Orthodoxy?," sometimes I would say it's a book series--no, it's not a book series, but it's not a movement either--it's just a sensibility, I think, a Catholic, Anglo-Catholic sensibility.

In fact, next summer I am in a conference with John Zizoulas, because the Orthodox Church wants to debate, and so it does seem to have some kind of resonance across things. But I recognize that there are other people doing similar work from, if you like, a non-apologetic work or a non-liberal apologetic work, and not only just within Christianity; Judaism is also moving towards that, with people like Peter Ochs' and Wolfson's and some of Edith Wyschogrod's work. And you'll find the same thing within Islamic theology, as well. You know, it's a whole new sensibility, it seems to me, about saying that we have been shut out of the public space for so long and been made to bow to the overriding discourses of secularism, and, no, we don't need to be backed into that corner--we actually have resources in our traditions which answer some of the questions of begging need in the world today.

JW: Any final comments from a member of the panel?

DC: Let me say this: it was not a slip of the tongue when I said that the Bible was the Word of God. I think that Barth is dead wrong on this. I think that Calvin has a much better approach to the subject, and let me just say that to invoke the need for hermeneutics at this point is simply to invoke a smokescreen. It's a big mistake to assume that that statement is implying a simplicity of some kind of identity between texts and all manifestations of divine revelation. It's never been used in the Reformed tradition in that way. And to say that there is no unmediated access--in response to that point: again he misses the point, because the fact is that there is no unmediated access to the person of Christ, period. So I wanted to reassert that again and make it clear that I knew exactly what I was saying.

JW: Do you wish to follow up at all before we end?

GW: No, no. That would be too long a debate.