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Book Review: Sojourners and Strangers

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end or ends? On Harvey's proposal, the answer is clearly no, but one way to continue the discussion of theology and sport begun in this book would be to consider this possibility in greater detail. Perhaps sport is not purely autotelic. Christians might be able to see it as being intrinsically valuable, as Harvey argues, but able to serve instrumentally valuable ends as well, including physical and psychological health, character formation, and missional efforts. This is a possibility worth exploring further, with the relevant arguments and insights offered by Harvey in hand.

If a case can be made that sport can be instrumentally valuable without corrupting its intrinsic value as an unnecessary but meaningful form of play, it will still be the case that Christians should very carefully think through the instrumental yokes we seek to place upon sport. So, even if Harvey is mistaken that instrumentalism is always wrong—and I am undecided about this—one important lesson that could still be taken away from this book is that when we do put sport into the service of some other end, we should so carefully and thoughtfully, so as to avoid corrupting both sport and ourselves as we engage in this gift of play graciously given by God to us, his creatures.

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Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church. By Gregg R. Allison. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012, 494 pp., \$26.99.

A plethora of books have been published in the last two decades about ecclesiology, many of which focus almost exclusively on the practical ministries, mission, and pragmatic functions of the church. What has been desperately needed is a work that focuses on the ontological realities that constitute the church, out of which the ministries arise. Gregg Allison, in his work *Sojourners and Strangers*, has produced such a work, with reasonable depth in the vast array of content covered, as well as with helpful pastoral applications along the way.

This book stands as the fifth volume in the series Foundations of Evangelical Theology. In this work Allison, Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and elder at Sojourn Community Church, garners for his readers a helpful synthesis regarding the new covenant people of God. While seeking to address a broad evangelical audience, dealing fairly with the broad spectrum of views, Allison writes as a confessional Baptist churchman and theologian. This does not detract from the value from the book, as the author deals with historical and denominational realities in an even-handed manner. This confessionalism functions as a strength to the book, challenging readers to examine their own views and to see this doctrine as having greater importance amongst the loci of theology.

This work is divided up into seven distinct sections. The first section deals with the foundational issues of ecclesiology, including various introductory and definitional matters (chapter 1), as well as the concept of covenant in relation to the church (chapter 2). In the first chapter, Allison begins by defining the church as

“the people of God who have been saved through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and have been incorporated into the body of Christ by baptism with the Holy Spirit” (p. 29). The author also gives a summary statement regarding what he believes to be the seven attributes that define the church (these attributes receive further elaboration in subsequent chapters): doxological, or oriented to the glory of God; logocentric, or centered on the incarnate Word of God and Scripture; pneumadynamic, or gathered and empowered by the Spirit; covenantal, or gathered as members in new covenant relationship with God and others; confessional, or united by personal confession of faith; missional, or identified as divinely called and sent ministers of the gospel; and spatio-temporal/eschatological, or assembled as a historical reality while awaiting a particular destiny (31-32). From this vantage point Allison then works through the polity and ministries which the church should adopt and in which it should engage. As such, one can see that the basic orientation of this work is that “from the ontology or nature of the church flow the church’s functions” (p. 32).

Allison continues this chapter further defining his task. Solidly grounding his work in the sufficiency of Scripture, looking specifically at exegetical, biblical, and historical theology, the author argues for a robust ecclesiology. His methodology deals with issues such as continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments, dealing with prescriptive and descriptive language regarding the church, and various ways to approach the doctrine itself. Here he affirms his belief in a moderate discontinuity approach (essentially progressive dispensational), as well as a belief in the general normativity of the book of Acts, while noting not every detail is applicable to the church today (p. 46). As stated, Allison is taking an ontological approach to ecclesiology, as opposed to the functional and teleological approaches that have become so popular in our modern milieu.

In chapter 2 the author begins his ontological approach in earnest. Here Allison looks specifically at the church’s relationship to the covenantal realities laid out in Scripture. In a succinct, but helpful, section, Allison lays out the progression of the six covenants seen in Scripture, and concludes, “the old covenant, as a covenant that God established with Israel, failed because of their tragic failure to keep it; thus, it has been replaced by the new covenant, with a particular emphasis on the Holy Spirit, as the covenant that God establishes with the church” (p. 74). The author also discusses here the inception of the church, the relationship between the church and Israel, and the connection between the church and the kingdom of God, all from a perspective of moderate discontinuity.

The second section of this work goes into greater detail regarding the seven characteristics previously mentioned that constitute the church. Chapter 3 focuses on the origin and orientation of the church, discussing the idea of the church being doxological, logocentric, and pneumadynamic. Allison states regarding these attributes, “Because its very existence is due to the triune God and his salvific work through Jesus Christ the Son and in the Holy Spirit, the church directs itself to the glory of God, while focusing on the Word of God, always empowered by the Spirit of God” (p. 122). Chapter 4 attends to the gathering and sending of the church, namely that the church is covenantal, confessional, missional, and spatio-

temporal/eschatological. This, the author asserts, grounds the church as they seek to gather around a core confession, while also seeking to bring others to respond in faith to the gospel message.

Part three deals with how this vision of the church will be actualized, namely through the pursuit of purity and unity in the church (chapter 5) by means of church discipline (chapter 6). Allison defines purity in actual conformity to the seven attributes that characterize the church, and unity in gathering around a common confession and mission. The author asserts that the growth of the church is dependent on the pursuit of purity and unity. The maintenance of this purity is accomplished through the practice of church discipline. Allison defines discipline as “a proleptic and declarative sign of the eschatological judgment” (p. 200). He then covers this topic from both theological and pastoral vantage points.

After these more foundational pieces are in place, section four deals with the governance structures of the church. First, Allison defines the various offices of apostle (an office which is unique and ceased in the first century), elders, and deacons/deaconesses (chapter 7). He then describes Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism as differing approaches to church polity (chapter 8). Finally, the author makes a case for his approach to church governance (chapter 9): “a plural-elder led, deacon and deaconess-served, congregational church with strong connections” (p. 297). In this final chapter, Allison also makes a case for multi-site churches.

Section five addresses the ordinances of baptism (chapter 10) and the Lord’s Supper (chapter 11). Again, the author teases out the various positions on these matters, always carefully nuancing these approaches from an exegetical and historical point of view. Allison seeks to articulate a credobaptist position while also affirming a stance on the Lord’s Supper that affirms that it is a memorial, but also, “As Christ promised his spiritual presence to accompany his church as it carries out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:20) and as it engages in church discipline (Matt. 18:20), so too the Savior and all of the salvific benefits associated with his sacrificial death are present in celebrations of the Lord’s Supper” (p. 396).

The final two sections of this work deal with the ministries of the church and various concluding remarks. Here Allison defines what spiritual gifts look like in the life of the church, and also discusses what entails true ministry within the church, namely, worship, preaching, evangelism, discipleship, care, and relating to the world. He then summarizes the contents of the work and concludes, “the church is a paradox, making its pilgrimage in the world and living faithfully *coram Deo*—in the presence of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—as ‘sojourners and strangers’” (p. 471).

The strongest aspect of this work is the fact that Allison does not follow what has been the trend in many modern ecclesologies. Instead of jumping straight into the function of the church, Allison offers a substantive prolegomenon and then delves into the ontology of the church, from which function springs. Regarding his prolegomenon, while various readers will undoubtedly disagree with his stance on continuity and discontinuity, or the degree of prescription and description in the book of Acts, Allison helpfully locates himself on these issues, such that the reader

is not left guessing at his perspective. Too often these issues are not handled overtly and thus assumed throughout the work, leaving readers to guess at the perspective of the author.

Ontologically, Allison teases out seven key attributes that should characterize the church. While this is a departure from the traditional marks of the church (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic), and from the Reformation distinctives (right preaching of the Word, right administration of the sacraments, exercise of discipline), Allison offers a compelling exegetical case to see these seven as true identity markers of the church. Especially helpful in this vein is Allison's attention to the concept of covenant and the tracing of the covenants throughout the canon. Based on this discussion Allison places the church in the midst of redemptive history and in relation to Israel to offer readers a thick contextual glance at how the church relates to the kingdom of God as seen throughout Scripture.

Another key benefit of this work is the amount of history Allison includes in his coverage of all the varying elements of ecclesiology. One can note from the footnotes that Allison draws rather extensively from his work *Historical Theology* to accomplish this part of the task. This is beneficial to the reader in that it allows them to note the historical progression of various points of doctrine, and see how certain denominational identifiers developed. Allison is even-handed in his treatment of the various viewpoints on these doctrines (e.g. transubstantiation, consubstantiation, spiritual presence, and memorial views of the Lord's Supper; pp. 372-86), while also clearly articulating his stance from a Baptist perspective.

Many other strengths of this work could be lauded as to its helpful contribution to foster solid ecclesiological moorings, but several potential weaknesses should be noted. Allison does make some doctrinal departures from what is typically considered the position of a Baptist ecclesiology. For example, Allison affirms a continuationist perspective regarding the spiritual gifts. I will not take the space to argue against this point per se, but two points should be noted. First, this is a doctrinal point typically dealt with in pneumatology, which Allison rightly affirms (p. 413 n. 1). If this is the case, however, it seems that it would be more beneficial to summarize these points on the spiritual gifts briefly, cite the key points and pages from pertinent works, and then spend more time on the actual ministries of the church. Second, if you are going to take this route it would be good to at least show some exegetical support for your position. Likely, Allison did not want to take the space to do this, and understandably so, but if that is the case it would seem the recommended summation would be in order.

Though certainly a contested point in Baptist circles, Allison also seeks to affirm and defend the existence of multi-site churches. The author does a commendable job in setting the stage by engaging the most recent literature on the topic, as well as offering a taxonomy of the various types of multi-site churches (pp. 310-12). He also seeks to offer exegetical support (which I believe the strongest I have read to date) and theological arguments for the legitimacy of such a structure. It is difficult, however, to accept such conclusions from the evidences Allison cites. First, for all the attention he puts on prescriptive and descriptive language in the beginning of the book, there is no discussion here, and these points he raises may be

seen as descriptive language of the genesis of the church and how it progressed outwardly in geographic concentric circles. Regarding his theological arguments, I am for the missional nature of the church, as well as its unity. I do believe, however, mission can occur perhaps more effectively by church planting, which is undoubtedly a biblical concept. Allison paints multi-site as being more local/regional, while church planting involves people who locate “a significant distance from the mother church” (p. 315). But could churches not be planted at times in relatively close proximity to the mother church, and could they not cooperate and work interdependently in similar ways to a seemingly paradoxical idea of “one church in multiple locations?” The end of this section, where Allison offers the example of his own church, is also unclear as to whether he thinks this is the only legitimate way to do multi-site, the most ideal, or merely one option amongst several (pp. 316-17). If multi-site is to occur, I appreciate his regional teaching-team model (for more on this subject see <http://www.9marks.org/journal/multi-site-churches>).

One final point to observe is Allison’s treatment of who can participate in the Lord’s Supper. He opts for a close communion approach, as opposed to closed communion, which again has been disputed by Baptists throughout their history. Thus, he affirms that communion is open to “baptized members in good standing in their respective churches” (p. 401). He makes some compelling arguments to support this view, but one facet I found that was not addressed here or really anywhere else is the pastoral task of shepherding a particular group of covenantal members. Granted, Allison does define shepherding under the responsibilities of elders as providing a Christ-like example, teaching God’s Word, warning members of dangerous doctrinal positions, and engaging in church discipline when the need arises. More attention on this last aspect would be helpful to the reader, thus thinking of discipline in both a formative and corrective sense. Certainly issues like close communion can be argued for, but one must also remember texts such as Heb 13:17, where church leadership is exhorted to keep watch over the souls of their members, because they will one day give an account to God for their shepherding. While not a pastoral ministry book per se, greater prominence could be placed on the shepherding ministry of the pastorate in relation to the Lord’s Supper (i.e. knowing the spiritual state of those who are partaking) and other areas.

With a work of this size, there will be quibbles with various points, but the overarching message of the book is one that should be lauded. *Sojourners and Strangers* could be placed alongside of such works as *The Church of Christ*, by Everett Ferguson; *Exploring Ecclesiology*, by Brad Harper and Paul Metzger; or *The Community of Jesus*, by Kendell Easley and Christopher Morgan. Due to its emphasis on ontological realities one could also compare Allison’s work to *People and Place*, by Michael Horton. It is an up-to-date treatment, detailing both historical and contemporary literature, as well as theological and pastoral concerns relating to ecclesiology. As such, this work is applicable to seminary students, scholars, and pastoral leaders who are seeking to teach about and lead churches in theologically-grounded ministry. Allison rightly reminds us that “ecclesiology may not be a doctrine of highest importance like theology proper or bibliology, but it is nonetheless of great importance, for this simple reason: the church of Jesus Christ itself is a necessary real-

ity. This fact propels the Christian doctrine devoted to the study of the church to a high level of prominence” (p. 59).

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Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian Theology of Scripture. By Matthew R. Crawford. Oxford Early Christian Studies Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, xi + 290 pp., \$125.00.

Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian Theology of Scripture is a revision of Matthew Crawford's dissertation completed under Lewis Ayres at Durham University in 2012. This monograph brings together two theological loci of interest to readers of this journal: the doctrine of Scripture and the doctrine of the triune God.

In the first chapter, Crawford introduces the subject of his investigation—Cyril of Alexandria's trinitarian theology of Scripture. Cyril's writings reflect the pro-Nicene theology(ies) that emerged in the latter half of the fourth century among Greek-speaking Christians in the East (as well as Latin-speaking Christians in the West). Pro-Nicene theology involved not only a distinct understanding of the triune God but also a “trinitarian” approach to Scripture. It is the latter emphasis which provides the point of departure for Crawford's study. Cyril was a prolific writer, and his exegetical and theological works offer a clear window into the trinitarian assumptions that shape his approach to Scripture. Framing the argument to be developed in subsequent chapters, Crawford explains that pro-Nicene theologies of Scripture focus on two basic movements: a divine movement toward humanity (i.e., theology of revelation) and the human encounter with divine revelation (i.e., theology of exegesis). Both movements possess a trinitarian shape: revelation comes from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. Exegesis is caught up in a reverse movement: Spirit-empowered contemplation of the Son leads believers to the Father.

Crawford explores Cyril's theology of revelation in chapter two. On the one hand, Cyril emphasizes the fact that the Son reveals the Father. In this sense, his account of revelation is Christologically focused. On the other hand, he affirms that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit act inseparably. How does he simultaneously affirm both realities? Crawford argues that Cyril's theology of revelation holds together the Son as revealer of the Father and inseparable operation by means of a sophisticated account of trinitarian agency. Crawford begins by exploring the Son as revealer of the Father, focusing on three analogies that Cyril employs: the Son as the Father's messenger, the Son as the Father's Word, and the Son as the Father's pen. Next, he turns to Cyril's understanding of trinitarian agency. Like other pro-Nicenes, Cyril affirms that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work inseparably and that inseparable operation reflects the essential unity of the divine persons. Inseparable operation, however, does not erase the distinction and order that exists among the divine persons. To the contrary, the distinction of persons is expressed in order of trinitarian operations: every action proceeds from the Father, through the Son, and