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The Formative Power of Liturgy. The Church as a Liturgical Community in a Post-Christendom Society

Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen

SUMMARY

In recent decades, an increasing number of theologians have discussed the consequences of the Western world's transition from the era of Christendom to an era of post-Christendom. This transition implies that in Western society the Christian Church now appears as a distinct

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people with a distinct way of life and worldview. This article demonstrates the significance of liturgy for the life of the Church in a post-Christendom society by focusing on four central aspects of Christian liturgy, namely gathering, sermon, sacrament and sending. It thus contributes to a theological understanding of the Church's liturgical life in the modern world.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In den letzten Jahrzehnten haben immer mehr Theologen die Folgen des Übergangs der westlichen Welt von einer christlichen in eine nachchristliche Ära diskutiert. Dieser Wandel bringt mit sich, dass die christliche Kirche in der westlichen Gesellschaft mittlerweile als eine ganz bestimmte Gemeinschaft von Menschen mit einer ganz bestimmten Lebensweise und Weltanschauung angesehen

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wird. Der vorliegende Artikel zeigt die Bedeutung der Liturgie für das Leben der Kirche in einer nachchristlichen Gesellschaft auf. Er konzentriert sich dabei auf vier zentrale Aspekte der christlichen Liturgie, nämlich Zusammenkunft, Predigt, Sakrament und Sendung. Auf diese Weise trägt er zu einem theologischen Verständnis des liturgischen Lebens der Kirche in der modernen Welt bei.

RÉSUMÉ

Ces dernières décennies, un nombre croissant de théologiens se sont penchés sur les conséquences du passage du monde occidental de l'ère de la chrétienté à une ère post-chrétienne. Cette évolution a pour conséquence que l'Église chrétienne apparaît désormais comme un peuple à part, avec son style de vie différent et sa vision

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du monde différente, au sein de la société occidentale. L'auteur montre ici l'importance de la liturgie pour la vie de l'Église dans une société déchristianisée en insistant sur quatre aspects centraux de la liturgie chrétienne : les réunions, la prédication, les sacrements et l'envoi. Il apporte ainsi un regard théologique sur la vie liturgique de l'Église dans le monde contemporain.

1. Introduction: The Christian Church in a post-Christendom society

Today an increasing number of theologians are discussing the consequences of the fact that Western societies are no longer so-called Christian societies, but can instead be seen as multi-religious societies.¹ These theologians refer to this shift as a

transition from the era of Christendom to an era of post-Christendom.

The era of Christendom began with the legislation of Christianity in the Roman Empire in the fourth century. Previously, the Christian Church had been persecuted, but over time it obtained a powerful position in the Roman Empire. A

number of theologians state that Church and society over time merged into a cultural, political and religious unity, which is sometimes called *corpus Christianum*.² Thus, during the Middle Ages, there existed a close link between the Church and the emperors, kings and princes of the European empires. In the era of Christendom, the Church and the population were considered complimentary entities, and the European empires were considered Christian.

A growing number of theologians now state that the Western world is in transition from the era of Christendom to an era of post-Christendom. Defining post-Christendom, Stuart Murray states,

[It] is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.³

Today we find numerous examples of how Western Christendom has been disestablished and the Western world has entered an era of post-Christendom. A number of important political, cultural and educational institutions have become secularised and can no longer be regarded as Christian. Thus, Christianity is no longer the foundation of Western society. We may sum up the discussion like this:

Church history contains two major shifts: the first shift encompasses the church's movement from being marginalised to having an influential position in society; the second shift embodies how the church is now losing its influential position and therefore becoming increasingly marginalised.⁴

In recent years, I have presented a theological critique of the fusion of Church and society known as *corpus Christianum*. I have also argued that the Church, *Corpus Christi*, is a distinct community, which in various ways differs from the society of which it is a part. My contention has been to state that it is quite unusual to regard a nation as Christian. Rather, the normal situation of God's people in the world is to be a community living among other communities, a people living among other peoples. There are rich and diverse sources that can be employed when the Christian Church seeks to understand its existence in a post-Christendom society. For example, the Church can recall Abraham, who promised that he would live a life different from the people among whom he

would lead his nomadic pilgrim life (Num 23:9).⁵ This leads John Howard Yoder to state:

The whole point of Hebrew identity since Abraham is a call to be doing something else amidst the world's power arenas. It is only by doing something different that Jewry in fact has survived; it is only in order to be something morally different that Jewry is called to survive.⁶

Furthermore, Yoder states that the Old Testament expresses the expectation that God's people have a minority status.⁷ Thus, in the Old Testament we read how God's people existed in foreign, often hostile environments:

Assyria in the age of Isaiah, Babylon in that of Jeremiah, Nineveh in that of Jonah, and then Rome in that of the New Testament Apocalypse, are in one sense all the same thing: the great world city, oppressive, drunk on power, worshipping idols, claiming to be the centre of the world, persecuting the saints, and doomed to destruction.⁸

This article is a continuation of my previous work on understanding the role of the Church in a post-Christendom society. Here I present a liturgical perspective on this important topic.⁹ Doing this, I particularly draw attention to the writings of the American Mennonite theologian Yoder.¹⁰ Even though few regard him as a liturgical theologian, it is appropriate to draw on his work, since it contains theological perspectives that can help us to understand how liturgy shapes the life of the Church. It is not unusual among liturgical theologians to operate with four pillars in Christian liturgy, namely gathering, sermon, sacrament and sending.¹¹ In this article, I will – based on these four aspects of Christian liturgy – demonstrate the significance of liturgy for the life of the Church in a post-Christendom society.¹²

2. The formative power of liturgy

2.1 Gathering

Sunday is a holy day for Christians but in a post-Christendom society, this is not the case for everyone.¹³ This means, among other things, that *Christians* gather for worship on this day. Christians may also gather on other days on other occasions. These gatherings may also be formative but here the focus is on the Sunday gathering for worship. This gathering gives them a sense of unity.

The New Testament indicates that when a person accepts Christ as Saviour and Lord, this person becomes *incorporated in Christ* and thus becomes a part of the body of Christ, a distinct community in this world.¹⁴ This community belongs to Christ and this fact must not be suspended by anything in the world. Commenting on this, Yoder states, ‘No political nation, no geographical homeland to which one belongs by birth, can take precedence over the heavenly citizenship of a Christian in one’s new birth.’¹⁵ As expressed in the New Testament, the Church possesses a citizenship which is not of this world, and, as it is said elsewhere in the New Testament, Christians must obey God rather than humans (Phil 3:20; Acts 5:29).¹⁶ The Christian community gathers to examine what it means to belong to Christ, to follow Christ and to maintain its identity in Christ. Again, Yoder explains this well:

The church is not just a certain number of persons nor a specific gathering of persons assembled for a particular religious rite. The church is God’s people gathered as a unit, as a people, gathered to do business in His name, to find what it means here and now to put into practice this different quality of life which is God’s promise to them.¹⁷

Thus, when a person accepts Christ as Saviour and Lord, this person becomes a part of a new social reality in the world. Lesslie Newbigin believes that God’s people are the new temple in which God dwells today: ‘The dwelling place of God upon earth did not end with the crucifixion. Out of that defeat He fashioned a new temple, the Body of Christ.’¹⁸ God is present in the Church and in the lives in his people by his Spirit.¹⁹ When Christians gather for worship, when hymns are sung, when prayers are prayed, when the faith is confessed, when sermons are preached, these practices shape the life of the Church, its social life and its way of viewing the world. The liturgical life of the Church is an initiation into the Christian life. Thus, Christians are not initiated into the Christian faith by simply reading about the Christian faith, but also through social interaction. Therefore, Miroslav Volf states, ‘A person cannot be fully initiated into the Christian faith without being socialised into a Christian church.’²⁰

The New Testament also states that the Christian Church is an eschatological community.²¹ It is a foretaste and a sign of the kingdom of God, which has broken into the world. In the

Church, Jews and Gentiles are united and thus this community serves as an eschatological sign of the gathering of people from all nations that will take place when the kingdom of God shall one day be fully established. Thus, the Christian Church is made up of various people, poor as well as rich, young as well as old. It is a people who are determined by an identity definition that runs deeper than any other given or chosen identity.²² In other words, the Church is a social reality in which all social and cultural barriers are transcended. Thus, when the Church gathers for worship, this points towards the day when God will gather all who accept Christ as Saviour and Lord. Not only the Christian Church, but also Christian liturgy is eschatological by nature.

When the Church gathers to pray, worship and celebrate communion, it performs liturgical practices, and the participation in these liturgical practices shapes the life of the Church. In the Church’s liturgical life, Christians are participating in the Christian tradition. Thus, Christians are part of a community which is part of an unbroken tradition which goes back to the early Christian congregations. Hence, the gospel is not communicated as a disembodied gospel, but is represented by a community that lives by it and invites others to live by it. This leads us to take a brief look at the importance of the sermon in the life of the Church.

2.2 Sermon

Yoder can help us to understand how liturgy shapes the life of the Church by drawing our attention to the significance of Holy Scriptures for the Jews. He notes that since a new temple in Babylon could not replace the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews began to gather in synagogues for prayers and the reading of their holy Scriptures.²³ Furthermore, he mentions that the earliest version of the Talmud was collected in Babylon and this collection of Scriptures was for the Jews what the canonical collection of apostolic writings is for Christians. The Talmud provided for the Jews a fulcrum – morally and philosophically outside and politically and geographically within the Hellenistic system – whereby they could determine what might be considered as acceptable compromises and unacceptable betrayals of their faith in the Babylonian exile.²⁴ The Old Testament was also collected in Babylon and these writings also helped them to understand their lives in Babylon.²⁵ According to Yoder, here the Jews discovered this:

There was within their tradition more of what it takes to survive than they had been aware of while they had been focusing their hopes on an imminent return to Jerusalem. There was, for instance, the set of hero stories stretching from Joseph through Ester to Daniel and his three friends. These Israelites in pagan courts had all stood up victoriously for the one true God, disobeying non-violently, amidst a hostile pagan culture.²⁶

Understanding sermons as reflections of the message of the biblical scriptures, one could argue that when the local Christian community gathers for worship, sermons help it to understand its existence in light of a Christian understanding of the world. Therefore, the intention with Christian sermons is not a return to the same doctrinal statements over and over again purely with the intention of doctrinal preservation. Rather, Christian sermons should be dynamic interpretations of the Christian life in this world.²⁷ Not only sermons but also hymns and prayers interpret the Christian life. In fact, liturgical practices express a communication of the Christian *kerygma* which helps and trains Christians to live faithfully in this world.²⁸ The Christian Church can be regarded as a social tradition that is embedded in history. Thus, Christian sermons can be regarded as an expression of an understanding of the situation of the local congregation in the light of the Christian Scriptures, the Christian tradition and their local context. Thus, for Christians, the Bible is not a book like any other. It has a normative status for the Church, which reads the biblical Scriptures within and as part of the Christian tradition.²⁹ Thus, when Christians gather to worship, they listen to sermons which shape their social practices and understanding of the world. These sermons inform Christians on how to raise children, live in marriage, deal with sickness and death, deal with money, etc.

2.3 Sacrament

In this article, I am not occupied with the development of a theological exposition of how we should understand communion, but I am investigating how sacramental practices impact the life of Christians.³⁰ Thus, my interest is: What does it mean that the sacrament plays such a central role in the life of the Church (notwithstanding that the sacrament actually plays a different role in different church traditions)? Much could be highlighted,

but here I will present two aspects of communion.

Firstly, it is worth noting that communion is a distinctive social practice that characterised the early church. In the early church, communion was a proper meal, and thus an economic act. In this way, it was normal for the first Christians to share their goods with each other. They lived together like families and communion was an expression of community, of caring and responsibility for others.³¹ Communion was also an expression of economic sharing and community in the early church; there was a social and economic dimension.³² When communion is practised today as it was in the early church, the Christian Church express economic sharing and community. Thus, communion is a central practice of the Church which helps to determine how Christians should act towards one another. This sacramental practice is clearly social.

Secondly, the central role of communion in Christian liturgy expresses how Christians acknowledge the reality of sin and their need for forgiveness. In fact, communion is a key indication of the fact that the congregation knows about its own brokenness and need for forgiveness. Thus, communion is a bulwark against the Church becoming triumphalistic. Although Christians claim that God is present in their midst and even though the Christian Church claims that it partially reveals the kingdom of God, the Church at the same time acknowledges that it hides the kingdom of God and contradicts the love of God which it is called to embody. Hence, the Christian Church has concepts that can cope and deal with guilt and forgiveness.³³ This sacramental practice is social but also personal.

2.4 Sending

At the end of the service, the congregation is sent out into the world – to which we now turn. Robert Martin-Achard claims,

The evangelization of the world is not primarily a matter of words and deeds; it is a matter of presence – the presence of the People of God in the midst of mankind and the presence of God in the midst of His People.³⁴

Christians are sent into the world to serve others and to proclaim the good news to all of creation and to invite others to become part of the Christian Church.³⁵

The liturgy is a celebration of God, but the life after the liturgy is also intended to be a celebration

of God. Christian life as a whole is intended to honour and praise God (Rom 12:1-2). The liturgy ends, therefore, with Christians being sent out into the world to practise an everyday life liturgy, so to say. The Christian liturgy helps Christians to live in the world, helps to practise a liturgy after the liturgy, as Orthodox theologians like to put it. Thus, Christians are sent to the world as *Christians*, as humans who have been transformed by the Christian liturgy. Thus, Christians are sent to the world as people who belong to a distinct community, who acknowledge their own brokenness and need for salvation and who understand themselves in light of the Christian *kerygma*.³⁶

Again, it is possible to learn from the Jews exiled in Babylon. Here the Jewish people existed to promote the peace and welfare of the places where God had sent them (cf. Jer 29:4-7). The Jews were, not only in Babylon but wherever they were called to live, called to live for the nations. This leads Yoder to posit that Christians, like the Jews, are scattered to exist for the world. Yoder also notes that diversity of culture and language is considered as positive in Paul's missionary sermons (cf. Acts 14:16-17; 17:26-27).³⁷ Alain Epp Weaver writes, 'The continuity of this exilic vision with Yoder's ecclesiology should be clear: The church is the community called to go out into the world, into diaspora.'³⁸ The Christian liturgy informs Christians about how to act when the liturgy has ended.³⁹ Thus, at the end of the church service the congregation is sent out in the world to serve others.

The mission of the Church should also be understood against the background of the mediation of salvation in the communion and sermons, and also against the background of the blessing of the Church. I expand on this insight below.

3. Conclusion: the significance of liturgy for the life of the Church

With the disestablishment of the old Christendom, the distinctiveness of the Church has become more evident. Today, the Church in the Western world increasingly emerges as a distinct people (ecclesiology) embodying a distinct way of life (social ethics) and a distinct understanding of the world (epistemology). This article has provided four perspectives on how Christian liturgy shapes the life of the Church in the world. First, in the past, the Western world followed the Christian liturgical calendar but this is often no longer the case. Thus,

Christian liturgy promotes a distinct way of life and also promotes a sense of unity among Christians when assembled (cf. section 2.1 above). Second, the Christian Church has its own narratives, as other communities may also have their own defining narratives. Once the biblical narratives were important stories for the Western world but this is no longer the case, or at least not to the same extent. When the Christian Church gathers, it understands itself in the light of its holy Scriptures, and thus the life of the Church is interpreted in a distinct way (cf. section 2.2 above). Third, communion is an expression of how Christians should act towards one another, and thus it promotes a distinct way of life. However, if we only state that the Church is a distinct community with a distinct way of life and a distinct way of viewing the world, we miss out on something important: it is crucial to grasp that the Church exists because of God's intervention alone and that it is totally dependent on the grace of God (cf. section 2.3 above).⁴⁰ Fourth, as we have seen, Christian liturgy also impacts the lives of Christians after the worship service has ended. At the end of the service the congregation is sent out into the world to serve others (cf. section 2.4 above).

There are numerous ways in which liturgy shapes the Christian life. In this article, I have just mentioned a few examples. Also, this article has not suggested how liturgy should be designed or conducted in order to be formative. Rather, the article proposes that all liturgies – formal or informal – are in one way or another formative. I have selected a useful fourfold categorisation of Christian worship under the headings *gathering*, *sermon*, *sacrament* and *sending* to demonstrate how liturgy may impact the life of the Church in a situation of post-Christendom.

In the theological discussion of the consequences of the shift from Christendom to post-Christendom in the West, the distinctiveness of the Church is a recurring theme. As I have stated earlier:

With the collapse of the old Christendom, the need for theological inquiry into the distinctive identity of the church and its role in modern society has become more and more urgent. While much of traditional ecclesiology has been developed in a context where ecclesial hegemony was presupposed, and where society was characterised by strong social coherence, a number of ecclesiological contributions have

been recently developed that no longer take this for granted.⁴¹

Here I would like to add: Previously, we have seen substantial theoretical-theological expositions of an understanding of the Church's distinctiveness.⁴² However, we also need to see, as I have done in this paper, more practical-theological analyses of how we should understand the Church's distinctiveness. Thus, in this paper I have proposed that liturgy should play a more important role in ecclesiological contributions which no longer take the old Christendom for granted.

Finally, I would like to point to an avenue for further studies on liturgy in line with the thoughts developed in this article. Ludwig Wittgenstein has been crucial for the inauguration of postliberal theology, even though it was George A. Lindbeck who really introduced postliberal theology with his book *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (1984).⁴³ As I have stated elsewhere:

The late Wittgenstein demonstrated that language is always embedded in a social context, that language and social practice cannot be detached from each other. Lindbeck argued that the Christian faith is embedded in a social tradition, which is called the church. Stanley Hauerwas has done for ethics, what Wittgenstein did for our understanding of language and Lindbeck for our understanding of dogma: He has argued that the Christian ethics is embedded in a social context, and that Christian ethics and the Christian church can not and should not be separated.⁴⁴

Hauerwas has criticised the restless attempts of liberal theologians to make the Christian Church and Christian theology relevant to the modern world. Instead, he believes that theology should be conducted first and foremost for the sake of the Church. Thus, a postliberal understanding of liturgy will state that the intention of Christian liturgy is not primarily to be relevant to the world, but first and foremost to interpret and shape the lives of Christians; in doing so, the life of the Church will be relevant and a witness to the world. Wittgenstein's cultural-linguistic understanding of language, Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic understanding of dogma and Hauerwas' cultural-linguistic understanding of ethics all have implications for our understanding of liturgy, because the language of the Christian faith, the doctrine of the Christian faith and the Christian way of life

cannot be separated from Christian liturgy, which is essential for the Christian Church. Thus, postliberal theology points toward a cultural-linguistic understanding of liturgy which has not yet been fully explored.

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Endnotes

- 1 I have presented a number of contributions to the discussion of the role of the Church in a post-Christendom society in recent years; this introduction is based on some of these contributions, including 'Beyond Christendom: Lesslie Newbigin as a Post-Christendom Theologian', *Exchange: A Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research* 41.4 (2012) 364-380; 'Beyond Sectarianism: The Missional Church in a Post-Christendom Society', *Missiology: An International Review* 41.4 (2013) 462-475; and 'Missional Folk Church? A Discussion of Hans Raun Iversen's Understanding of the Danish Folk Church as a Missional Church', *Swedish Missiological Themes* 100.1 (2012) 23-36.
- 2 Barry A. Harvey, *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999) 80-81.
- 3 Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004) 19.
- 4 Nikolajsen, 'Beyond Christendom', 366.
- 5 John H. Yoder, 'The Original Revolution' in *The Original Revolution* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1971) 27; cf. Num 23:9.
- 6 John H. Yoder, 'Jesus the Jewish Pacifist' in Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (eds), *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2008) 85.
- 7 John H. Yoder, 'Let the Church Be the Church' in *The Original Revolution* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1971) 116.
- 8 John H. Yoder, 'See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun' in *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 77.
- 9 According to Alexander Schmemmann, 'The task of liturgical theology consists in giving a theological basis to the explanation of worship and the whole liturgical tradition of the Church.' See Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, translated by Asheleigh E. Moorehouse (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003) 17. Hence, this article contributes to a theological understanding of the liturgical life of the Church in the world.
- 10 I could also have considered Stanley Hauerwas'

- work on liturgy. Because others have done that, I have chosen to focus on Yoder's writings.
- 11 For example, see Mark Galli, *Beyond Smells and Bells: The Wonder and Power of Christian Liturgy* (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2008). Galli states, however, that some only operate with two centres in liturgy, namely *sermon* and *sacrament*. See Galli, *Beyond Smells and Bells*, 16.
 - 12 The word liturgy comes from the Greek word *leitourgia*, which means *the work of the people*. In this article, the term *liturgy* does not refer to a specific denominational liturgy such as the Lutheran or the Roman Catholic liturgy. Similarly, the term *Church* does not refer to a particular denomination. However, in section 2.3 below, one might sense that a Protestant understanding of communion is expressed. In my opinion, the Christian Church cannot give up certain element in its liturgy (e.g. the sacraments and sermons). Therefore some elements of the Christian worship service should not change but in many ways, contextual liturgies can be developed.
 - 13 Therefore, in my home country, Denmark, in recent years we have seen examples of Christians refusing to work on Sundays and therefore being fired. We have also seen Christians making sure that when they are hired for a new position a clause is included in their contract so that they do not have to work on Sundays.
 - 14 Here and throughout this article, I often refer to the Church as distinct. It is important to make clear what I mean by this. In this article, 'distinctive' is used almost synonymously with the term 'identity'. Inspired by Paul Ricoeur, distinctiveness can be understood in two different, yet compatible, ways: first, the distinctiveness of the Church can be captured or qualified as something intrinsic – from the inside, rooted in the very being of the Church (the Church's *ipse-identity*). Second, the distinctiveness of the Church may also be qualified in relation to something which is not the Church, and in this way elucidate the distinction between the Church and the world. Since the Church is not just distinct, but distinct in relation to something else, identity may be understood not in an isolated manner, but as a concept of relationality (the *idem-identity* of the Church). These two aspects of the distinctiveness of the Church cannot be disassociated. Rather, there is an interdependence and dialectic between *ipse-identity* and *idem-identity*. Therefore, when I refer to 'the distinctiveness of the Church', it is hard not to use such phrases without some ambiguity. The inspiration from Paul Ricoeur stems from his book *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
 - 15 Yoder, 'Original Revolution', 22.
 - 16 John H. Yoder, 'The Peace Testimony and Conscientious Objection', *Gospel Herald* (1958) 58.
 - 17 Yoder, 'Original Revolution', 30.
 - 18 See J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, 'Will God Dwell on the Earth?', *National Christian Council Review* 79 (1959) 100.
 - 19 Newbigin also believes that this chosen people where God has taken up residence in the world is destined to cause the falling and rising of many: 'This church, then, the one new family created by God in Christ out of all tribes and nations and peoples, is set by God in the midst of the world as the sign of that to which all creation, and all world history moves. It is the body of Christ, the new man, the second Adam, the new human race, growing up into its full stature and drawing into itself men of every kind. It is here that the world is given the opportunity to see and accept its true destiny; accept or reject it, for both possibilities remain open.' See J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, *Is There Still a Missionary Job Today?* (Glasgow: The Iona Community Publications Department, 1963) 16-17.
 - 20 Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 173.
 - 21 Paul believes, for example, that Christ gave himself to tear Christians out of this present evil world (Gal 1:4), that Christ has redeemed those who slaved under the law and the principles of the world (Gal 4:1-11), and that Christ has freed Christians from the power of darkness (Col 1:13).
 - 22 John H. Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1992) 28.
 - 23 Yoder, 'Jesus the Jewish Pacifist', 78.
 - 24 Yoder, 'Jesus the Jewish Pacifist', 80.
 - 25 Yoder, 'See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun', 56-57.
 - 26 Yoder, 'Jesus the Jewish Pacifist', 78.
 - 27 Craig R. Hovey, *Speak Thus: Christian Language in Church and World* (Eugene: Cascade, 2008) 26.
 - 28 C.H. Dodd sums up the *kerygma* in Peter's speeches in Acts in this way: 'First, the age of fulfilment has dawned', 'Second, this has taken place through the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ', 'Third, by virtue of the resurrection Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God as Messianic head of the new Israel', 'Fourth, the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory', 'Fifth, the Messianic Age will reach its consummation in the return of Christ', 'Six, an appeal is made for repentance with the offer of forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and salvation'. See C.H. Dodd, *Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963) 21-24. Dodd also identifies a Pauline *kerygma* on pages 24-26.
 - 29 The reflections above are expanded in Jeppe Bach

- Nikolajsen and Kristian Kappel, 'Menighedens liv med Bibelen – Kevin J. Vanhoozers bidrag til udviklingen af en ekklesiologisk hermeneutik', *Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 40.2 (2013) 121-134; some of the present formulations rely on this article.
- 30 Cf. James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009) 166. See also footnote 13 above.
- 31 See Karl Olav Sandnes, *A New Family: Conversion and Ecclesiology in the Early Church with Cross-Cultural Comparison* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1994).
- 32 Yoder, *Body Politics*, 14-27.
- 33 This second perspective on communion is surprisingly not expressed in the writings of Yoder. See also footnote 40.
- 34 Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962) 31.
- 35 This must be seen against the background of the blessing of the Church and God's empowerment of the Church to participate in his mission in the world.
- 36 See footnote 28.
- 37 Yoder, 'See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun', 63.
- 38 Alain Epp Weaver, 'On Exile: Yoder, Said, and a Theology of Land and Return' in Peter Dula and Chris K. Huebner (eds), *The New Yoder* (Eugene: Cascade, 2010) 146.
- 39 Cf. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 167.
- 40 This, to my mind, crucial insight is only weakly expressed in the writings of Yoder.
- 41 Nikolajsen, 'Beyond Sectarianism', 462-463.
- 42 For example, see Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, *Redefining the Identity of the Church: A Constructive Study of the Post-Christendom Theologies of Lesslie Newbigin and John Howard Yoder* (Oslo: MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2010).
- 43 George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984). I presuppose some familiarity with postliberal theology. For a good introduction to postliberal theology see William C. Placher, 'Postliberal Theology' in David F. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2001) 343-354. Today, many theologians acknowledge that they are inspired by postliberal theology and many have tried to draw postliberal theology in various directions.
- 44 Nikolajsen and Kappel, 'Menighedens liv med Bibelen', 133 (my translation).