Articles (Annotated):


Dr. Beale has set forth a very interesting argument in which he compares Revelation 21:1-22:5 with key prophecies in the Old Testament. He examines the literal-vs.-symbolic argument of the advent temple being the final stage of a series of “temples” that God has established to secure his presence among his people on earth. He feels that John’s temple in Revelation 21 and 22 is a literal temple fulfillment, though not one made of “brick-and-mortar.” He announces that there is a “problem” in Revelation 21. Just following the description of the temple coming down from heaven are details of a large arboretum city shaped like the temple. The new heavens and earth are, in effect, a very large garden. Beale further reminds us that the Solomonic and Herodian temples were an earthly model of the original, heavenly temple; the temple, all of the construction materials and items chosen to decorate and fill it, and the area surrounding it, are all symbolic items built as a scale model of heaven and earth, God-style. Beale states that the most important way for there to be another temple would be for it to be in the form of Christ’s completed temple: his people, led by him.


Author Bliese has constructed a cohesive pattern to form a foundation from which to build a program for the missionary work of preaching the gospel. He believes that “a ‘mission matrix’ can serve as a tool for a church to analyze its life and witness. He states that each church’s dependence on its own pet tools for evangelism actually may stifle the evangelical movement. He reexamined the framework of theology that most churchmen work from, and attempted to weave together that framework with ministerial and structural mindsets.

He discusses how the focus on mission has come to the forefront since the advent of the baby boomer generation. He desired to tie the new concepts together in a visible way to assist in the focusing of a congregation. He explained the importance of understanding the development of the church growth. Like trinity, the term mission is not found directly in the Bible; however, it is implied as the outgrowth from the basic steps for regeneration, leading an individual toward his or her work, under direction of Holy Spirit, in advancing the gospel. Refocusing
on three major areas can tie all other aspects of church doctrine together and renew the vigor of all who call themselves reformed Christians.


This Eastern Orthodox clergyman is responding to a planning session conducted in anticipation on the Ecclesiology Statement given in the Harare Report regarding unity of the church. He speaks from the standpoint of the culture of India, and how he feels church unity must be considered, in a series of “observations”.

First, he is concerned regarding the interpretation of the lack of concern regarding unity over many years, and points out the division which remains within his own wing of the church; concerns over unity have been passed on to the younger members and the World Council of Churches in general. Secondly, he feels that the church limits its concept of fellowship and hopes that the Global Christian Forum can assist in reconciliation in church unity. Further, he states that some interventions already attempted have caused more hurt than good. In reviewing the statements regarding the universality of the church, he noticed that the term ‘holiness’ (119) was missing. Next, he is concerned how unity could produce campaigning for particular denomination. He is also concerned about several issues regarding serving the social needs inside and outside the church.

He puts forth a challenge, that church unity will not result in a new form of colonization; that the local effects on the church will produce better fruits than are now experienced.


Dr. Saracco speaks out as a Pentecostal minister from Latin America against the resistance to ecumenism. He cites a song which says, “You belong to the same church as me, If you stand at the foot of the cross.” (127) His article claims that, rather than being diverse, the church is divided. He believes that the Pentecostals have been among the hardest working toward making the church more visibly unified.

The unity he seeks doesn’t depend on the authority of a hierarchy, rather acknowledging that if we have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we are together the church. He feels it is important that all churches develop and maintain appropriate regard and thankfulness for each other, eliminate bigotry, and keep a central focus on Christ above religious ritual. He further claims that playing ecclesiastical word games helps us to ignore other churches as part of the body of Christ. He
reminds us that we lack authority of the Holy Spirit to maintain division based on Old Testament cleanliness codes.


Van Gelder presents to us a contrast. He discusses the history of the formation of the denominational church as identifying itself differently from the church of missionary work of the gospel.

He explains that the established mainline churches have always understood themselves to be “the one, true church.” (23) He traces their history from the religious wars of the middle ages and identity as God’s body through the establishment of denominational organizations. The result, Van Gelder says, was that many of other religious persuasions were subject to persecutions.

Van Gelder further states that most denominations formed themselves under the inspiration of the war of independence and Civil Wars, resettling after the Second World War into a suburban presence. He states that they value their denominational independence and regulatory autonomy very highly, and see themselves as organizations functioning within themselves. He makes a distinction between this mindset and mission churches who see themselves with a “missiological ecclesiology” (31), as existing for the purpose of going out and promoting both the redemptive work of Christ (a “Western” emphasis, 32), and promoting the rebirth and relational aspects of the Holy Spirit’s work (the “Eastern” emphasis, 32). Simply becoming a church is insufficient; the missional church exists to continue this work and live up to its reason for being.


The Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches has adopted a “creed” of sorts for the Christian church. They address a number of points of agreement forming an invitation for further discussion with the ultimate goal of unity.

The purpose they put forth is dual, stating what has been accomplished so far, and giving the status of community with an eye toward what yet divides. Unity would include fellowship in communion, appreciation of the differing gifts and ministries given by the same faith, as one body, with one hope; distancing and exclusiveness need to be addressed, along with being accountable one toward another. The fact of one baptism, the text states, demands honesty and openness, quoting Eph. 4:15 as to speaking the truth in love and growth toward Christ, and one baptism also express mutual belonging.
The text addresses what it sees as a lack of accountability among the churches of their level of understanding, faith, and witness of the gospel. Peace is to be pursued so that the church can be built up. Questions are posed as a means of self-checking and prayerful soul-searching. There is a final exhortation to encourage a mutual walk and listening to the Spirit’s promptings to the churches in Revelation.

Books:


