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**CAN THESE BONES LIVE? A Catholic Baptist Engagement with Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics, and Social Theory** by Barry Harvey. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008. 303 pages, index. Paperback; \$24.99. ISBN: 9781587430817.

Barry Harvey makes the provocative proposal that the contemporary Western church increasingly resembles a scattered collection of dusty skeletons. These lifeless bones are the remains of a once vibrant and transformative church, now paralyzed by compromise, privatization, self-interest, and corruption. But hope is not lost. Harvey proclaims, along with the prophet Ezekiel, that by the grace of God in Christ and by the life-giving breath and power of the Holy Spirit these bones can live again. Through allegiance to God's in-breaking kingdom and by

rethinking its own constitutive practices, the church can recapture its true identity and mission as a pilgrim people en route to the already, but not-yet, City of God.

Harvey argues that the church is where Christ takes form concretely in the world. By the church's distinctive practices and language, it bears witness to the reality of God in its worship, teaching, witness, and work. From Barry's perspective, the church's present lifeless state has resulted from several factors, including the rise and fall of Christendom, the emergence of the modern state, the invention of "religion" as a set of private, internal beliefs, and the impact of consumerism. The upshot of all this is a tragic shift in the church's identity and mission that has compromised its prophetic message. Instead of being an alternative community of disciples, bound intimately to God and to one another by the Spirit and in loyalty to God's in-breaking kingdom, the Western church has generally become a collection of individual consumers with shared, but private, beliefs who gather together to consume religious goods and services.

Harvey narrates and analyses this deterioration in Part One of the book. In Part Two, he asks how the church might by God's grace be resuscitated by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's living earthly-historical body. Harvey proposes that a renewed devotion to four constitutive practices in particular is crucial in this regard. These are scriptural reasoning, doctrine, sacraments, and spiritual formation, each of which Harvey rethinks and reformulates in order to help the church be faithful to its true identity and calling.

Harvey describes scriptural reasoning as Bible reading that engages our imagination and intellect to direct our steps toward God's future. He rejects interpretive approaches that attempt to isolate abstract and universal meanings (Hodge's "facts" or Scheiermacher's "experience") from concrete life and practice in a typically modern "kernel and shell" fashion. In contrast, Harvey emphasizes the performative and dramatic dimensions of scriptural reasoning, in line with similar proposals by Kevin Vanhoozer, N. T. Wright, Francesca Aran Murphy, and Samuel Wells. Doctrine, the second practice, engages contemporary thought and scholarship to wrestle with questions about God, Christ, and the world that cannot be resolved strictly within the scope of biblical imagery and narration. Third, the sacramental practices of baptism and the Eucharist draw us to participate liturgically in God's mysterious and transformative presence and action in the world. These sacraments "take isolated producer-consumers and produce martyrs, witnesses to the apocalyptic activity of God in Christ" (p. 228). Finally, spiritual formation is crucial for sustaining the church's identity and mission as an alternative society. Authentic spiritual formation includes what Harvey calls "unselfing," a process in which our identities as disembodied consumers and faceless producers (formed by state and market) are unmade and then remade as members of Christ's body through Christian narrative, virtues, and practices.

Harvey's cultural critique is penetrating and his suggestions for moving forward are insightful and practical. Enriched by the thought of several key ecclesial and cultural thinkers, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, James McClendon, Rowan Williams, and to a lesser extent Alasdair MacIntyre, John Milbank, and Stanley

Hauerwas, Harvey produces a well-informed and thought-provoking diagnosis of where the Western church stands today. Moreover, he provides a helpful contribution to the ongoing discussion of what it means for the church *to be the church* in our contemporary, post-Christendom context. I commend this book to all thoughtful Christians that are interested in the intersection of church and culture.

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