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Approaching *the Holy* with Thomas B. Dozeman and Rudolf Otto

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Abstract

This article considers Thomas B. Dozeman's ecumenically orientated and biblically situated theology of ministry (*Holiness and Ministry,* 2008) by assessing his utilisation of Rudolf Otto's 'idea of the holy'. Despite significant promise, basic obstacles to appreciating Dozeman's theology of ministry appear to a Catholic perspective. In order to understand the reason for this tension, Dozeman's methodology is analysed. Because of the particular way in which he incorporates the work of Rudolf Otto on the nature of holiness, Dozeman is unable to present a model of ministry wherein 'word' and 'sacrament' exist in harmony, or a model of ministry which looks to Jesus Christ for its formal type – two issues which any Christian theology of ministry must find problematic. In general, ecumenical and ministerial theologies are ill served by methodologies which are based in a transcendental anthropology of holy experience.

Introducing the significance of his new book, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination*, Thomas B. Dozeman notes that, 'There is presently no comprehensive biblical theology of ordination, which could serve as a resource for the formation of clergy in individual traditions of the Christian faith and provide the framework for ecumenical dialogue.'[1] In order to render this contribution for theology and ministry, the professor of Hebrew Bible at Union Theological Seminary establishes two goals. The first is 'to construct a biblical theology of ordination that is embedded in broad reflection on the nature of holiness in the biblical literature'. The second is to foster ecumenical dialogue over the subject of ordained ministry (p. 4). Dozeman's success with the first goal establishes the possibilities of success with the second: His understanding of holiness is the criterion by which conversation can be prospered amongst the various Christian traditions about ordained ministry.

[1] Thomas B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5. Henceforth, references to Dozeman are cited parenthetically.

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In order to assess the ecumenical possibilities of Dozeman's work, this article aims to assess Dozeman's methodological concern for *holiness*.[2] By looking at the way Dozeman's methodological priorities direct his biblical theology, one can better understand how he arrives at certain conclusions about the nature of Christian ministry. Admittedly, this article does not claim to present a comprehensive review or assessment of Dozeman's biblical or pastoral theology. Such an endeavour would require close, material attention to the way in which *Holiness and Ministry* utilises the work of Mircea Eliade and Jacob Milgrom to interpret Christian tradition and praxis. Instead, focus is drawn to Dozeman's theoretical principles, precisely insofar as he grounds them in the thought of Rudolf Otto: how does Otto's 'idea of the holy' account for Dozeman's theological horizon? Attention to Rudolf Otto is further and more generally significant because of the prominent influence that his work (and name) continues to bear in studies of religion and

[2] Whether or not and how *holy* is distinct from *sacred* in English or in other languages is a thorny matter. Some authors believe in their identity, others make clear on their distinction, and others seem to be unconcerned that such a distinction is possible. Dozeman falls into this last category, according to which this article will treat the terms as basically fungible with each other. Scholarly accounts of the words' distinction vary depending on the commentator's perspective and discipline. It is generally recognised that *holy* is more narrow and confessional in significance than *sacred*. However, historians and anthropologists of religion tend to incorporate *holy* within the broader, sociological or structural category of *sacred*, while theologians and biblical exegetes tend to recognise *holy* as a unique category of meaning, which stands utterly beyond the category of *sacred*. Rudolf Otto, whose theory of 'the holy' is critical for Dozeman, is in definite support of the latter view (although in German, there is no nominal distinction available, as there is in French and English, Otto's very purpose is to establish religiosity as a field of experience and valuation utterly autonomous from everything else mundane). Dozeman, however, would seemingly support the former view, which subsumes the significance of the 'holy' according to its pragmatic, mundane significance. For a helpful study of these words with reference to their biblical usage, see Ermenegildo Bertola, 'Le sacré dans les plus anciens livres de la Bible', in Enrico Castelli (ed.), *Le sacré* (Paris: Aubier, 1974), pp. 201–20. In the same volume, see Henri Bouillard's insightful essay on the use of 'sacré' in the study of religion, where he distinguishes between those of the French, sociological school (per Emile Durkheim) and those of more theological bent, among whom he counts Otto ('La catégorie du sacré dans la science des religions', pp. 33–56). Using the distinction between the *sacred* and *holiness*, Christian Duquoc has argued that the Catholic liturgical reforms of Vatican II were not intended to undervalue man's sense of the sacred, which has arguably been the effect. Rather, the Council sought to repristinate man's understanding of the sacred (which is objectively concerned with cultic places, things and actions) by more clearly orientating it to man's concern for the holy (which is subjectively concerned with man's ethical justice and personal closeness to God). See his 'Du sacré au saint', *Lumière et vie* 279 (2008), pp. 31–40.

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theology. Thus, significant effort will be devoted to explaining the basic contours of Otto's thought. First, however, one does well to consider the *prima facie* commensurability between Dozeman's theology and that of a particular Christian tradition – in this case, the general, contemporary theology of the ministerial priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church.

Models of ministry, models of holiness

Précis of Dozeman's model of ministry

Dozeman's theology of ministry is essentially dialectical, which is to say that it is constituted by an active 'tension' and oscillation between two, fundamentally alternative aspects of ordained ministry – service of the 'word' and of 'sacrament'. Dozeman formally grounds this 'creative tension' in 'the Mosaic office' (pp. 5–6, ch. 3). On the one hand, Moses exemplifies a charismatic or 'prophetic' ministry of the word (pp. 46–51). Moses receives from the Lord himself the prerogative and power to invade a people's profane perspective to lead them towards liberation (see Exod 3–4). This ministerial dynamic is private, which is to say that it is essentially situated within the relationship between God and the elected recipient, Moses. Only because Moses himself has been 'invaded' by the mystery of God, can he 'transfer' in turn such prophetic holiness to the people (p. 27). This mission of the prophetic word, then, is impermeably located within one's own experience of the Lord's call and communication. As a result, this dynamic is objectively inscrutable; it is autonomous from the management of others and their institutional aggregation.[3]

On the other hand, Moses typifies a professional or 'priestly' ministry of sacrament (pp. 51–5; cf. Exod 6–7). In this case, the Mosaic office is established for the sake of spatio-sacral functionality, that is, temple ritual. According to Dozeman's reading of the Pentateuch's priestly literature (informed by the work of Jacob Milgrom), the sacramental cult is a fundamental symbology of praxis: it separates and distinguishes God's people from predominating, profane worldviews in order to return God's people to that world as heralds of his purifying justice and peace. In this case, the charismatic dynamic of the word is basically absent. In a charismatic ministry

[3] Moses' personal relationship with the all-holy God is a matter distinct from (but related to) his legitimacy and reception as a leader of the people. Indeed, Moses' effective leadership is contingent on his mission's attention to the people's needs, the cries of which actually originate the call in the first place, according to the Providence of God: 'The power of holiness resides in the relationship between God and the one who is called out. This special relationship is the source for a functional role of the ordained within the prophetic ordination to the divine word. The ordination occurs when the people of God recognize the charisma of the leader'. Dozeman, *Holiness*, p. 123.

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of the word, all that is needed is the individual's transcendent but personal experience of God's prophetic influence. For sacramental ministry, on the other hand, the minister simply needs be trained in a professional way, so that his cultic functioning can best communicate and foster his tradition's symbology or cultural cosmography. This dialectic appears as a fundamental tension both resident in the minister's identity as well as emergent from the precise needs of the people he serves:

> The Mosaic office requires the ordained to relate the two poles of prophet and priest in a creative tension. The tension suggests that an important feature of ministerial identity is not to determine whether ordination is sacerdotal or functional, but when the power of holiness is best accessed through sacramental rituals or through charismatic teaching of the divine word at different occasions in ministry. (p. 132)

From an ecumenical perspective, Dozeman's dialectical typology is laudable. Many traditions and time periods in Christian history have tended to emphasise either a ministry of the word or of the sacrament against the other. Dozeman is subtly arguing against a unilateral interpretation of ministry (i.e. according either to word or to sacrament), not primarily because it misunderstands the nature of ministry but because it mishandles the mission of ministry, which he sees as constituting man's selfless, religious response to the holy. Indeed, Dozeman is able to maintain this ostensibly healthy dialectic because he seeks a disciplinary unity amidst the endeavours of biblical, systematic and pastoral theology.

Dozeman is also underscoring the ministerial desideratum of genuine religious experience as central to pastoral performance: in order to serve and communicate with God, one must know who God is. In an age and culture where secular models of professionalism have arguably exercised undue influence in seminaries, Dozeman's appeal for spiritual authenticity is a welcome voice. Nevertheless, at the same time, he highlights the duly institutional aspect of ministry, recognising that professional organisation and training serve the laity, ensuring a ministerial order and integrity upon which they can depend. Through this societal regulation, religious identity is preserved and passed on in a trustworthy way.

Assuredly, Dozeman's presentation is especially and evangelically apropos the contemporary situation: 'The dominance of the secular world in the modern era, with its tendency to marginalize the power of the sacred, has presented a significant challenge to the profession of ordination' (p. 4). It has been variously and widely noted that secularism has wrought a general confusion over ministerial identity. Citing the late Catholic spiritual author,

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Henri J. M. Nouwen, Dozeman finds this vocational confusion largely due to 'the lack of clear theological reflection on the nature of the vocation' (p. 5).

Points of agreement

Considering the above points, the Catholic – i.e. this Catholic – finds Dozeman's ministerial model *prima facie* amenable. Certainly, the contemporary shortage in priestly vocations has been commonly lamented. The 1990 Synod of Bishops was convoked in order to help address this very crisis. John Paul II's post-synodal exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, describes 'many problematic or negative elements' in contemporary society, which, as Dozeman would agree, effectively and tragically 'marginalize' the sacred (cf. p. 4).[4] As a pastoral response to this crisis, the late pope's exhortation was meant to renew the church's understanding of and commitment to ordained ministry. Like Dozeman, the church's Magisterium has recognised the need for clear theological reflection, since the very crisis is significantly pursuant to 'an erroneous understanding of – and sometimes conscious bias against – the doctrine of the conciliar Magisterium'. Thus, 'a correct and in-depth awareness of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood is the path that must be taken in order to emerge from the crisis of priestly identity'.[5]

The Catholic understanding of the priesthood also seems commensurate with the dialectical model of Dozeman's. John Paul II uses Jesus' allusion to Isaiah 61:1–2 (see Luke 4:21) as a central point for understanding: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'[6] In this quotation, one discerns both the charismatic impetus and ethical orientation that Dozeman's dialectical model presents. Indeed, this twofold aspect is evident in the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, articles 4 and 5, respectively.[7] On the one hand, the 'living' and 'saving' Word of God as personally experienced by the priest is emphasised; on the other, the 'performance of sacred functions' in cooperation with the episcopal hierarchy (which has the charge of the priest's seminary formation) is highlighted as well.

[4] John Paul II, *I Will Give You Shepherds* (Boston: St Paul, 1992), nos. 7, 8.
[5] Ibid., no. 11.
[6] Ibid.
[7] See 'Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests' in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, NCWC trans. (Boston: St Paul, 1999).

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Points of disagreement

Three notable differences between the Catholic perspective and Thomas Dozeman's, however, inevitably emerge. By setting up an absolute contraposition between *word* and *sacrament*, Dozeman locates the minister's own mystical or religious experience squarely and exclusively within his ministry of the word.[8] Alternatively, the Catholic tradition teaches that the precise means towards fostering communion with God is Christ's *sacramental* economy.[9] Thus, formation for sacramental ministry is substantially concerned with personal holiness, involving a complex fourfold dynamic of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral elements. The sacramental ministry is no mere professional functionality. Written and published under the auspices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the 2006 *Program for Priestly Formation* (5th edn) makes clear: 'Formation, as the Church understands it, is not the equivalent to a secular sense of schooling or, even less, job training. Formation is first and foremost cooperation with the grace of God.'[10] Compare this instruction with Dozeman's diametrically opposed reflection on formation in sacramental ministry: 'The priestly ordination is not grounded in . . . extensive self-criticism of religious experience, nor is the power of holiness in this personal relationship between God and the ordained. Rather, candidates for the priestly ordination undergo critical training in tradition in order to pass institutional standards, which are necessary to become ritual celebrants' (p. 124). But, as John Paul II made

[8] For Dozeman, this duality proceeds from the 'dual nature of holiness'. However, he sets about '[clarifying] the dual nature of holiness as a dynamic force and as a ritual resource by examining two contrasting contemporary studies of holiness' (from Otto and Milgrom); whilst the dual nature theory itself proceeds from a third (that of Eliade; pp. 23–4). Notice how Dozeman's dichotomy gives spiritual 'power' entirely to the realm of the 'word': 'The dynamic character of holiness is conceived as a power that directly invades humans. It provides the background for interpreting the ordination to the divine word in Christian tradition . . . The ritual character of holiness [on the other hand] is the basis for the Christian ordination to sacramental rituals'. In the end, these 'two theories of holiness' and their attendant, practical or ministerial implications 'are in such profound tension with each other that *they cannot be harmonized*' (p. 23).

[9] Consider the words of the Constitution from Vatican II (1963), *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: 'The liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of the man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses.' On this point, Dozeman would agree. However, the conciliar document continues to say that man's sanctification 'is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs'. See 'The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy', *Sixteen Documents*, no. 7. Also see the Decree on the Sacraments from the seventh session of the Council of Trent (1547), particularly can. 6, whereby it is affirmed that the sacraments of the New Law 'contain' the grace they signify, such that they are not mere signs.

[10] *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th edn. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006), no. 68.

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clear, wholly consistent with previous Catholic Magisterium, 'By sacramental consecration [read: ordination] the priest is configured to Jesus Christ as head and shepherd of the Church, and he is endowed with a "spiritual power," which is a share in the authority with which Jesus Christ guides the Church through his Spirit.'[11] It is not that the aspects of charismatic dynamism and institutional organisation are not each distinctly present in the church's understanding of priestly ministry: Indeed, they are, as was shown above. But they are not seen as intrinsically at odds with one another or in irreducible 'tension' with one another, as they are in Dozeman. God's initiative towards man comprehensively engages man's response to God, which twofold dynamic of katabatic mystery and anabatic religion is resolved and perfected in the God-man, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh and universal mediator of salvation.

Thus, the second notable difference between the Catholic understanding of ministerial ordination and that of Dozeman emerges, concerning the type or exemplar of the ordained minister. As standard Catholic documents make clear, drawing upon scripture, Jesus Christ is the model of ministry, in whose very office and power as High Priest (Heb 5:6, 7:17–21) the ordained man shares. 'The priest's fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd. The priest participates in a specific and authoritative way in the "consecration/anointing" and in the "mission" of Christ (cf. Lk 4:18–19)'. In this way, the 'truth of the priest ... emerges from the Word of God, that is, from Jesus Christ himself'.[12] Thus, 'Compared with Jesus, *Moses* and all other "mediators" between God and his people in the Old Testament – kings, priests, and prophets – are no more than "figures" and "shadows of the good things to come" instead of "the true form of these realities" (cf. Heb 10:1)'.[13] For Dozeman, however, even the ministry of Christ is subordinated to the dichotomous type and ministry of the 'Mosaic office' – a term whose provenance is nowhere cited (cf. p. 35). Indeed, it is precisely this Mosaic office that, for Dozeman, shows how 'prophet and priest cannot be harmonized with each other. Instead, they are held in tension in the person of Moses, who represents the one office of ordination to the prophetic word and to the priestly sacramental rituals. This creative tension provides the model for a biblical theology of ordination to the word and sacrament in Christian tradition' (p. 58). This is to say that the model or theory of 'creative tension' is heuristically determinative of the data of the new covenant and Christian tradition. As a consequence, Dozeman reads the twelve Apostles

[11] John Paul II, *Shepherds*, no. 21.
[12] Ibid., nos. 16, 15.
[13] Ibid., no. 13 (emphasis on 'Moses' added).

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and St Paul as embodying – respectively – the twofold tension between institutional function and charismatic dynamism (see pp. 107–11). Most significantly, though, nowhere in Dozeman's Christian theology does he suggest that the person and ministry of Jesus is the primary referent. (There are no entries for Jesus Christ in the book's 'Subject Index'.) Dozeman does not entertain the possibility that the person and work of Jesus Christ could resolve the ministerial tensions arguably present in the prophetic and priestly traditions of the Old Covenant.

Finally, from an ecclesiological perspective, the starkest distinction between a Catholic theology of pastoral ministry and that of Dozeman regards 'communion'. As Dozeman's model was recounted above, for a ministry of the word (which charismatically and inviolably communicates divine power), only a single relationship is determinative – that between God and the minister. Admittedly, Moses' effective reception as a leader is contingent on meeting the people's needs. Moses' very vocation emerges from God's response to the people's cry.[14] But, for Dozeman, Moses' own discernment or self-understanding has nothing essentially to do with his relationship with the people. In other words, two sets of relationships (only morally or practically related) exist side by side – God and the minister, God and the people. The minister enters into a relationship with the people only in the realm of sacramental ministry; and again, this relationship is constitutively practical and occasional. Otherwise, the Catholic Church underscores that the union between the clergy and the people in Christ is more than simply moral . . . it is mystical; the church is a true, living body.[15] And this mystical communion is utterly grounded in the very power and person of Jesus Christ. As *Pastores Dabo Vobis* teaches,

[14] See n. 3, above.

[15] See Pius XII's encyclical letter (1943), *Mystici Corporis*. nos. 61–3. Although not present in the text promulgated through *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 35, the version of this document on the Vatican website provides paragraph nos. (See http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi-en.html.) Dozeman believes that locating mystical experience exclusively in one's ordination to the word actually 'addresses the problem of religious experience in a historical context. The ordination to the divine word addresses the problem of history and religious experience through the prophetic interpretation of past tradition accompanied by persuasive speech about its significance of later generations' (p. 124). In other words, the invisible Church of Christ, which traverses and transcends time and space, can be accepted because of an individual minister's historical understanding and personal witness to transcendent experience.

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> The priest's fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd . . . But intimately linked to this relationship is the priest's relationship with the Church. It is not a question of 'relations' that are merely juxtaposed, but rather of ones that are interiorly united in a kind of mutual immanence. The priest's relation to the Church is inscribed in the very relation that the priest has to Christ, such that the 'sacramental representation' to Christ serves as the basis and inspiration for the relation of the priest to the Church.[16]

Now, as the Bishops' *Program for Priestly Formation* makes clear, 'All priestly formation must be firmly grounded in the truths of the Catholic faith, for it is from these truths that the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood are drawn. Likewise, it is critical that formators and seminarians keep returning to the core of the faith for the integrating vision necessary.'[17] The Catholic seminarian or instructor could systematically compare the church's traditional theology of the priesthood over and against Dozeman's in order to see precisely how practicable his ministerial theology for clerical formation is. Such an account, however, would easily develop into a paralleling of formulations or conclusions – as was somewhat tediously begun above – the benefit of which would not be terribly constructive.

The present author would nevertheless like to render a critical assessment of the twofold aim of Dozeman's book. For, if one is to prosper genuine possibilities for ecumenical discussion about ordained ministry – which is assuredly among the most contentious of ecumenical *topoi* – critical attention needs be paid to theological methodology. Thus, doctrinal divergences are now left aside and attention is turned towards analysing the methodology of Thomas B. Dozeman's *Holiness and Ministry*.

Of methodology

Dozeman lays out three interrelated 'methodologies' by which he constructs a biblical theology of ordination (pp. 5–6). They are proper to three distinct fields of research and argumentation in the human sciences: (1) 'the history of religions and the study of holiness'; (2) text-critical analysis of the Pentateuch, and (3) canonical and intra-biblical criticism. In fact, Dozeman has but one methodology. Although undefined by him, 'methodology' can be understood as referring to the principles which govern the methods of one's research and argumentation (and which proceed from the nature of the subject matter itself). It is the *logos* or *ratio* of one's investigative

[16] John Paul II, *Shepherds*, no. 16.
[17] *Priestly Program*, no. 14.

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procedure. Now, Dozeman's methodologies 1, 2 and 3 are not mutually co-determinative. Rather, as will become clear, methodology 1 predetermines the use of research from the disciplinary areas of 2 and 3: the theory or anthropology of religions (methodology 1) establishes the dialectic between charisma and cult.

Dozeman's duplex model of ministry is dependent on his utilisation of Rudolf Otto's 'idea of the holy' (generally, see pp. 23–8).[18] Not cited by Dozeman, Melissa Raphael's study of Otto is preliminarily instructive: 'Otto's concept of holiness holds the rational and non-rational elements of religion in *creative tension*, and as such it has a corrective function as a via media through the contemporary religious situation.'[19] Thus, focus now turns to Otto's thought, which presents Dozeman with a 'theory' for seeing in Christian ministry an 'irresolvable' but 'creative tension', the understanding of which could be beneficial for ecumenism and evangelisation in the contemporary world.

Rudolf Otto

The phenomenology of religious experience and Friedrich Schleiermacher

No student of religion and theology can approach the subject of God's 'holiness' (or any of its notional cognates) without appreciating the influence of Rudolf Otto (1869–1937). A Lutheran theologian, Otto's classic work is *Das Heilige*, (1917; English trans., *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923).[20] He argues

[18] The functional or ritual resource of the sacraments, as distinguished from the dynamic ministry of the word, is dependent on Jacob Milgrom's theories about the Hebrew scriptures' priestly theology of purity (generally, see pp. 28–32). Given the confines of this article, an extensive critical treatment of both Otto and Milgrom cannot be given. But again, this article will show how the philosophical outlook and outline of Otto's theory essentially predetermines the irresolvable tension between word and sacrament. Also see n. 8, above.

[19] Melissa Raphael, *Rudolf Otto and the Concept of Holiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; emphasis added). Raphael's interesting interpretation of Otto seeks to use his theory as the platform for a prophetic-feminist critique of unjust social structures. Such an argument is novel, since many critical theorists and liberationist theologians believe that the distinction between the sacred and the profane actually enables the machinations of social oppression.

[20] The briefest and most recent introduction to Otto and *Das Heilige* in English is Colin Crowder, 'Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* Revisited', ch. 2 in Stephen C. Barton (ed.), *Holiness Past and Present* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2003). At present, the two best in-depth overviews to Rudolf Otto available in English are Todd A. Gooch, *The Numinous and Modernity* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000); and Philip C. Almond, *Rudolf Otto: An Introduction to his Philosophical Theology* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1984). Almond's work is widely referenced in recent secondary literature, and provides a worthy introduction to the life and work of Otto. However, Gooch's study is informed

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that man's 'idea of the holy' is evidenced by religious experience and is formally constituted by sublime dynamics of religious feeling. Informed by vast comparative knowledge of religions, as well as influenced by the epistemology of Immanuel Kant (à la Jakob Friedrich Fries) and the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Otto's work has achieved undeniably standard status, regardless of its critical reception.[21]

Otto carries the Protestant reaction against Rationalism to which Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) gave orientating impetus, and which continues today in many strands of Liberal theology.[22] Inspired by Romantic trends (à la Friedrich Schlegel), the Reformed Schleiermacher gave recourse to individual experience for elucidating the foundations of religion. (It remains moot in what ways, in what measure, and how consistently Schleiermacher subjectivised Christianity through 'experience'.) For Schleiermacher, the *élan vital* of religion was reducible to a 'sense of the infinite' or a 'feeling', which is to say, to a quasi-aesthetic sense that is formally non-intellectual and therefore impervious to 'cultured' contempt. Belief in God proceeds from the transcendental 'feeling of absolute dependence', for which all human persons have the capacity.[23] Worthily,

by much more acute philosophical and cultural savvy. Gooch's ultimate thesis is that Otto's contribution must be seen as situated within a desacralising modernity that it was trying to redress.

[21] Not to be overlooked, further, is the influence of Martin Luther, whom Otto certainly sees as one of history's premier religious individuals. In many basic studies of Otto, one will find it stated that *Das Heilige* was the most-read theological work of the twentieth century. Theodore M. Ludwig places Otto on par with Karl Barth, in terms of theological influence in early twentieth-century Germany. See *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 11, ed. Mircea Eliade, s.v. 'Otto, Rudolf' (New York: Macmillan, 1987). Nevertheless, the actual achievement of Otto is still debated and opinions vary widely. See ch. 1 in Gooch, *Modernity and the Numinous* for a survey of critical assessments.

[22] See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John Harvey (New York: Oxford, 1923 [1917]), pp. 1–4. As Philip Arnold points out, the Pietist movement was essential for the origins of Liberal Protestant theology. In fact, it was in the writings of the Moravian Pietist, Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700–60), that Otto first encountered the religious significance of 'dread' and 'horror'. Moreover, von Zinzendorf taught that all men had a *sensus Numinis*, which no doubt influenced Otto's conception of 'the numinous' as critical for religious sensibility. See Almond, 'The Context of his Thought', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), p. 350.

[23] See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (New York: Harper & Row, 1958). This edn carries an introduction by Rudolf Otto, wherein one sees his deep appreciation for Schleiermacher: 'He did not wish to furnish new evidence for the "existence of God", the independence of the soul, and immortality. . . . He sought to prove that if one experienced the environing world in a state of deep emotion, as intuition and feeling, and that if one were deeply affected

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Schleiermacher sought to outstrip practical reason and ethical judgement's corner on knowledge, which had relegated God to a personally irrelevant postulate of subjective epistemology's *a priori* categories. However, in seeking to defend the rationality of Christianity according to the naturalness of religion, he arguably attenuated the supernatural newness and uniqueness of the Gospel. (Indeed, the Liberal trend initiated by Schleiermacher gave rise to its staunch opposition in the new Protestant orthodoxy, most notably, with Karl Barth.)

Otto believes he critiques and refines Schleiermacher's thought in two ways. First, despite his better understanding, Schleiermacher had presented 'religious feeling' as a species within a genus (i.e. as a *feeling* in general). But for Otto, the 'feeling of absolute dependence' that God's presence elicits is categorically distinct from other analogously religious feelings – such as being morally edified or nobly inspired. Ultimately, true religious feeling cannot be conceptualised or articulated. Moreover, Otto reads Schleiermacher's emphasis on the subjectivity of feeling as being little more than 'self-feeling'. Instead, genuine religious 'feeling' is concerned with God as such, with the 'wholly other'; therefore, the experiential response to God demands distinctive categorisation, for which end Otto proposes a different term, namely, 'creature-consciousness'. Otto gives Schleiermacher's 'feeling' a more distinctly intentional (i.e. trans-subjective) character by speaking of 'consciousness'. According to Otto, God is something of an object for experience in a way that God was not in Schleiermacher's much less idealistic, 'feeling'.[24]

Second, Otto's phenomenological style would direct introspective reflection beyond but through subjective valuation towards recognition of reality as extra-subjective. 'It will be our endeavor to suggest this unnamed Something to the reader as far as we may, so that he may himself feel it.'[25] Even though he was not practising phenomenological reduction in the methodologically precise way that Edmund Husserl was soon to outline, Otto moves from the data of phenomenally stimulated feeling to the judgement that the holy is a reality transcendent of but present to the world. In turn,

by a sense of its eternal and abiding essence to the point where one was moved to feelings of devotion, awe, and reverence – then such an affective state was worth more than knowledge and action put together. And this was what the cultured had to learn from the beginning' (p. xix). One might take Schleiermacher as giving a general apology for religion; Otto wanted to do the same, but ultimately, for Christianity. Also see Schleiermacher's refinement of his original apology in H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (eds), *The Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

[24] Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 8–10.

[25] Ibid., p. 6.

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reflection on this distinctively religious judgement discloses the *a priori* 'idea of the holy', without which such absolutely unique, empirically underivable judgements would not be possible. Profitably, Otto discerns that that which inspires the 'feeling of absolute dependence' is no mere inference from experience but rather an encounter in and through experience itself.

These two basic critiques/refinements of Schleiermacher frame the basic two-part structure of Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*. Chapters 1–7 are concerned with a descriptive and evocative phenomenology of uniquely religious experience. Chapters 8 and following constitute Otto's quasi-philosophical account, which seeks to chart the way in which such experience is schematised by religious reason. This two-part structure is evident in the subtitle to Otto's work, 'An inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational'. With this twofold outline in mind, closer attention can now turn to Otto's theory. After this review has been conducted, it will become clear that Dozeman appropriates Otto's phenomenology of religious experience for the sake of its non-rational elements; he does not advert to the ways in which Otto saw the holy as necessarily ordered – however incommensurably – towards the rational and normative extrapolation of doctrine and ritual.

The idea of the holy

It is through the 'numinous' that one approaches Otto's conception of the holy. Although they are intimately connected and overlap each other, the two terms should not be equated, as they often are in popular religious and spiritual literature invoking Otto's name. Otto coined 'numinous' to describe that which effects a state of mind, such that the subject's 'creature-consciousness' discloses its utter dependence on what is 'wholly other'. That man experiences the *numen* – the presence of terrible and daemonic power – seems well attested throughout history. When a subject encounters the numinous as the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, his or her concern for this mystery is 'schematised' through religion, which acknowledges the transcendent as terribly dangerous and yet bearing of salvific power. It is this awesomely repelling and attracting dynamic which is present within certain numinous experiences, which signals the holy and give rises to religion.[26]

[26] On 'the numinous', ibid., pp. 5–7. Otto was part of a larger movement of theorists who no longer viewed relationship to one or more deities but reference to 'the holy' as the specifying distinction of 'religion'. The classic, programmatic statement in this regard is the first sentence of Nathan Söderblom's article, 'Holiness: General and Primitive', in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 6, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scriber's, 1914): 'Holiness is the great word in religion; it is even more essential than the notion

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The magnificence of God draws the devotee's absolute dedication and confidence, for it is most truly 'awesome'. The aweing experience of the divine is primordially of both fearsome and enthralling content.[27] Experience of the *mysterium* is the 'moment' of transcendence; it is 'at once an object of boundless awe and boundless wonder, quelling and yet entrancing the soul, constituting the positive content of the *mysterium* as it manifests itself in conscious feeling'.[28] Words cannot define the experience here. As concepts, words are at best 'negatively' referential. For Otto, the experienced feeling is itself and alone the 'pure positive' of theological intentionality.[29] At this 'moment', 'we are referred . . . to that which mysticism has rightly named the *fundus animae*, the "bottom" or "ground of the soul" (*Seelengrund*). The ideas of the numinous and the feelings that correspond to them are . . . absolutely "pure"'.[30]

While the numinous discloses the supra-conceptuality of the creature's dependence on an absolute Other, it further points beyond itself to that Other, which is engaged through 'the idea of the holy'. This 'idea' is, for Otto, an *a priori* category of the mind that contains both 'positive' non-rationality as well as an impetus towards 'negative' rationality. Contrary to the readings of many influential commentators, Otto's idea of the holy is not essentially irrational.[31] As Otto says, 'the "holy" in the fullest sense of the word is a combined, complex category, the combining elements being its rational and non-rational components', and even 'each in the same degree'.[32] The *a priori* idea *ipso facto* begins to 'schematise' its non-rational core of experience into symbolical 'ideograms' (such as mystery, wholly other, transcendent), which

of God.' For a history of the way 'the holy' and 'holiness' has figured into the study of religions, see Henri Bouillard, 'La catégorie de sacré'.

[27] Otto schematises the 'tremendous' and 'fascinating' moments in chs 4–6 of *Idea of the Holy*.

[28] Ibid., p. 41.

[29] See ibid., p. 13.

[30] Ibid., p. 112. One of the arguments against Otto is precisely that he believes that mystical experience is a species of the genus of religious experience. For a critique of this position, as well as a general critique of Otto for believing that there can be a non-constructed or pre-thematic experience which is genuinely noetic or able to qualify for knowledge, see L. Philip Barnes, 'Rudolf Otto and the Limits of Religious Description', *Religious Studies* 30 (1994), pp. 219–30.

[31] Consider Mircea Eliade's introductory remark to his classic, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Task (New York: Harvest, 1959 [1957]), p. 10: 'After forty years, Otto's analyses have not lost their value; readers of this book will profit by reading and reflecting on them. But in the following pages, we adopt a different perspective. We propose to present the phenomenon of the sacred [sic translation] in all its complexity, and not only insofar as it is *irrational*' (italics original).

[32] Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 112, 136.

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are not Kantian 'concepts' but which somehow evince a rational relation to the numinous.[33] Nevertheless, one must recognise that, for Otto, the holy is itself objectively intentional only in terms of feeling: Only non-rational feeling is of 'positive content'. The order, then, that is imposed upon non-rational experience by rational schematisation is formally constituted as a subjective response. There is no intelligible identity between the subject's rational conceptualisation and the holy object of non-rational experience; and yet, the relationship is itself formally and structurally integral. In other words, the holy is objectively real, in and of itself; and it is the holy that the religious subject truly experiences; however, the religious response to the holy is precisely that – the subject's response, the form of which is constituted by the schematisation of his *a priori* idea as well as other contextual factors, such as the inherited *a posteriori* culture of ritual and doctrine.

In treating the holy, Otto is concerned to show that it is laden with 'value'. It bears an objective, even if positively ineffable 'content' which formally directs religious response. To be sure, that which is essentially holy – God – is so because he is absolutely transcendent, separated from all else in the sheer definiteness and necessity of his reality. Thus, inasmuch as this transcendence is most purely recognised in man's religious feeling, God's holiness is not so much a substantial attribute of the Godhead, but rather, for Otto, a compelling relational 'value' that summons the rational creature's existential commitment. While remaining perfectly objective, the idea of the holy yields evaluative repercussions for the feeling subject – worship and homage is to be paid. Thus, the radical incommensurability between the creaturely subject and its transcendent, non-conceptual object is concomitantly broached and bridged. For Otto, religious experience of the absolute *numen* reveals at once the absolute holiness of God and the 'absolute "profaneness"' or sinfulness of the human subject.[34] Hence, the end of religion is precisely to mediate this infinite distance that man's transcendental

[33] Ibid., pp. 45 ff.

[34] Ibid., p. 51. Otto's Lutheranism comes through strongly; for, in his encounter with the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the man who recognises himself as 'profane', 'unclean' or 'sinful' does not desire to become holy himself, but to have his sinfulness 'covered' (ibid., p. 54). The search for the highest religion, then, is the search for that religion which is most conscious of man's need and opportunity to be imputed with holiness. Unlike the French sociologists (à la Emile Durkheim), Otto does not counterpoise 'the holy' to the common, secular realm, which is 'the profane'. As Bouillard and others point out (see n. 2, above), the French school is sociologically reductive. Otto, on the other hand, thinks that the profane is distinctly religious in scope. For his part, Dozeman has no use for Otto's understanding of the profane. Apparently, Dozeman prefers a sociological rendering of the profane, and generally shies away from any discussion of 'sin' that is not in the general terms of egoism. Thus, 'the goal of biblical

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reflection has thematised. The 'negative' or 'indirect' conceptualisations of religious reason are aimed to lead back towards the 'positive' and ineffable core of divine experience. Despite his detractors, Otto does not seek to slough off the rational aspects of religion, but to redirect and consecrate them towards their truest origin in that which is supra-conceptual.

To summarise, the three basic characteristics of Otto's theory are as follows. (1) The holy is a reality, the objectivity of which is disclosed through phenomenological reflection on one's own religious experience. (2) The holy is a transcendent power evidently effective throughout the world's history; but it is not positively intelligible in itself. (3) The only way to account for the universal possibility of this inviolable experience which leads to rational extrapolation is to postulate that man natively and consciously encounters the holy by virtue of an *a priori* 'category' of the subject.

Concluding assessment

One is now in a position to assess Dozeman's methodology, respective of its theoretical but selective roots in Otto's understanding of the holy. Like Otto, Dozeman establishes his theorisation through reflection on experience, with initial recourse to the history of religions. Dozeman's introduction begins by noting 'the focus on the sacred' in Ancient Near Eastern civilisations. He avers, 'our research must be embedded in broad-based reflection on *the nature of holiness in human religious experience*' (p. 3, emphasis added). The problem here, however, is that advertence to 'experience' does not *ipso facto* establish the knowledge of 'natures', (which is why Dozeman must give recourse to 'theories of the holy'). The experience of one man or, much more nebulously, of a culture, cannot become a disassociated object for study. Unawares or unconcerned, Dozeman is in the thick of a crucial, epistemological problematic of religious study and theology.

For his part, Otto is conscious that his theory of the holy requires some kind of account which can navigate through the Scylla and Charybdis of Cartesian mentalism and Humean empiricism.[35] Thus, the experience of which Otto speaks is specifically the reader's very own. He does not

religion is to overcome the separation between God and humans, the sacred and the profane, and ultimately to overcome the violence that originates from the human ego', and which enters the world through Cain's fratricide. See pp. 16–19.

[35] As Adina Davidovich notes, the reason Otto turned to a Friesian brand of post-Kantian epistemology is that Fries 'supplements the transcendental analysis of experience with a psychological introspection', such that the Kantian critique is not merely of the subject's knowing, but, more broadly, of the subject's entire field of experiencing. Such reflection leads to 'the discovery that certain principles or modes of thought function in our cognitive and evaluative life as an empirical fact'. See her *Religion as a*

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confuse the historical data of religions with the personal phenomena of experience; rather, he adverts to the former in order to turn the subject's reflexive attention to the latter.[36] Therefore, Otto notes that, unless the reader recognises within his or her own experience past moments of encounter with the numinous, that which he aims to discuss (i.e. the holy) can have no significant effect; for the holy is essentially ineffable and inexpressible. Hence, Otto's oft-cited caveat, which Dozeman himself reiterates: 'The reader is invited to direct his mind to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience . . . Whoever cannot do this, whoever knows no such moment in his experience, is requested to read no further.'[37] Throughout Otto's analogical and descriptive analysis of the numinous and the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* in the first half of his book, he is seeking to evoke in his reader the conditions by which he or she might judge that this reality in fact exists . . . because he or she has experienced it. As Adina Davidovich has succinctly put it, 'Otto undertakes to guide his readers in a sympathetic process of anamnesis, or remembrance, to evoke in them the religious reeling and the trust in its noeticity.'[38] Arguably, it is Otto's success as a religious writer in the tradition of 'the sublime' that is his most lasting achievement; for it helps to explain the overwhelming and lasting success of *The Idea of the Holy*, despite the array of negatively critical arguments from various disciplines.[39] Otto is certainly a theoretician; his philosophic coherence and success is a separate matter. But his ultimate aim is to ignite the reader's personal response to the holy rather than to proffer a bald, objective account of that which cannot adequately be theorised.[40]

Otto recognises the problem that modern epistemology poses, especially to the theologian and theoretician of religion. He believes that he can avert such danger by considering the most objective of all realities – the Wholly

Province of Meaning: The Kantian Foundations of Modern Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 150, 155–6.

[36] Almond notes, 'The central pivot of Otto's theory of religion' is that 'the study of religion and theology needs to be grounded in the analysis of the religious consciousness'. See his 'Context', p. 349.

[37] Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, p. 8, and Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry*, p. 27.

[38] Davidovich, *Religion*, p. 185. By 'noeticity', she means to say that these religious experiences are bearing of genuine – even if non-conceptual – knowledge (see p. 149).

[39] See Lynn Poland, 'The Idea of the Holy and the History of the Sublime', *Journal of Religion* 72 (1992), pp. 175–97.

[40] The short but compact work of John Webster is a genuine contribution to theological approaches to 'the holy'. It is critical for Webster that 'theological thinking about holiness is itself an exercise of holiness'. See his *Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 8.

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Other – as precisely that reality which renders human creatures as religious subjects. In speaking to the intimate experiences of the Other, for which all humans have the capacity and of which many are profoundly cognisant, Otto tries to establish a kind of community of feeling, which trusts that it experiences the same reality in relatively the same manner, even if it is unable to account critically for such epistemic solidarity. Taking an Ottonian tendency to an unfortunate extreme, Dozeman seems to immure the isolation and experiential inviolability of the one who is charismatically invaded by the holy. For him, the minister alone is the proper bearer and knower of the holy power which he possesses. It is not only essentially but also practically incommunicable between individual human persons.

Otto certainly acknowledged the problem of argumentation based on subjective experience. As was recounted above, he discerned it in Schleiermacher and sought to correct it. Consequently, the second half of Otto's book is just as significant as the first half. For, having disclosed the non-rational core of all religious experience, Otto works towards showing 'its relation to the rational'. Indeed, both the non-rational and rational components of the holy issue from its *a priori* category. Nevertheless, the rational or 'negative' aspect to this idea is formally related with the holy, while the actual connection or relation is, of itself, supra-intelligible. According to this understanding, there is a basic plurality of religious expressions, such that, as with Schleiermacher's Liberal trajectory, there is no one, true religion.[41] And yet, somewhat against the tendency of his own theory, Otto concludes his book with what is without doubt an apology for Christianity as

[41] John Webster recognises that there are basically two paths towards understanding 'holiness'. One option pursues a religious phenomenology, which takes its cues from the history of religions. 'That option has had and continues to have a powerful presence, both in some dominant styles of religious and cultural studies, and in those modern Christian theologies that do their work under the spell of Tillich's correlation of "the holy" and "the divine".' 'This is because in them the generic notion of "the holy" has been accorded priority over exegesis, and has in effect swamped the specificity of a Christian understanding of holiness'. Furthermore, 'God is not simply holy mystery, the nameless and voiceless whence of some sense of the numinous, an ineffable and indefinite deity. In his unalterable and unassailable majesty he is the one who he is'. See ibid., pp. 18, 36. Hence, Webster would also be critical of Roch Kereszty's recent formulation for a renewed 'integral theological treatise', insofar as the foundation is located 'within the context of Universal Salvation History, and therefore in the context of the history of religions', Kereszty encourages theologians to 'concentrate on the phenomenon of the holy' in order to 'show' that the 'full revelation of divine holiness' is found in Jesus. See his 'Toward the Renewal of Theology and the Theologian', *Communio* 35 (2008), pp. 278–9. To be sure, Webster's theologising is specifically Protestant, since he emphasises scripture as the hermeneutical absolute, free from metaphysics but yet still germane to ontology. Nevertheless, Webster advocates

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the highest religious expression of man, and with a christological confession whose divine ontology is stunning: 'We can think of a stage of revelation as underivable from that of the prophet . . . We can look beyond the prophet, to one in whom is found the Spirit in all its plenitude, and who at the same time in his person and his performance is become most completely the object of divination, in whom Holiness is recognised apparent. Such a one is more than Prophet. He is the Son.'[42] Thus concludes Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*. Despite his own universalist foundations of religious anthropology, he aspired to conclude with rather exclusive and unsurpassable claims about the personal and ecclesial experience of Christianity, or at least, of Jesus of Nazareth.

For his part, Dozeman does not aim to envision Christ as more than a 'prophet' in his book on Christian ministry and holiness. Indeed, he does not move beyond the dispensation of the Hebrew Covenant, entirely ignoring Otto's theory of the holy apropos its rational dynamic, which Otto himself considered essential. Regardless of Otto's philosophic success, he strove to show that the normative intelligibility of Christianity is rooted in its numinous non-rational encounter with the divine. Dozeman indeed recognises that non-rational experience of the numinous begs religious conceptualisation and articulation. But for this account, he turns to Jacob Milgrom: a Jewish exegete of Leviticus.[43] That there is a christological – and not simply sociological – relation to God through man's sacramental activity is of no practical significance for Dozeman's pastoral theology. To put things more abstractly, for Dozeman – unlike for Otto – there is no intrinsic, formal relationship between religious formulation and transcendent experience. Dozeman uses Otto exclusively for his famous doctrine of the holy as non-rational, and then juxtaposes this theory to Milgrom's 'ritual resource' theory. Thus, Dozeman's selective use of Otto's theory sets up the irresolvable 'tension' between charismatic and professional dynamics of biblical ministry before any data whatsoever are explored. The 'tension' that Dozeman discerns

a position which grants heuristic priority to revelational data – i.e. the Bible and the person of Christ – and is therefore amenable to genuine ecumenical discourse. For a relevant Protestant critique of the theological trend inspired by Otto, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991 [1988]), pp. 115, 136–40.

[42] Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, p. 178.

[43] Dozeman's methodological principle of 'canonical criticism' means for him that 'the Torah is constructed to speak directly to future readers about the ongoing power of holiness in the Mosaic office' (p. 9). However, Dozeman's reader must wonder, who or what establishes the terms of intelligibility? For a Christian theology, it must be the person and event of Christ in light of the church's tradition.

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in the Mosaic office of Christian ministry lies, therefore, not in the data of faith but in his own methodological making.

Whatever intelligibility Dozeman can offer regarding the holy and the ministry thereof, it is fundamentally unoriented towards Christian fulfilment and remains an unresolved dialectic, partly because he uses Otto's brand of religious phenomenology, partly because he does so too selectively. A model of ministry which carries an inherent, biblically grounded tension would be acceptable and enlightening, were it grounded in the person and mission of Jesus Christ. Dozeman, however, reads the Christian economy of ministry entirely in terms of the 'Mosaic office'; and, as has been reviewed above, this reading is hermeneutically subjected to Otto's phenomenology of religion that is, however enticing, itself somewhat conflicted. In *Holiness and Ministry*, there is no chapter or even subchapter devoted specifically to the person or work of Jesus Christ. The problem is not that Dozeman's theology is not Catholic. Rather – one must severely assess – it is not adequately Christian. Dozeman formally locates the intelligibility of Christian ministry outside the person and ministry of Christ!

If one would offer a theology of ordination germane to 'ecumenical dialogue among different Christian traditions' (p. 4), one had best begin by looking for holiness in a common and communicable form for understanding and devotion rather than a universal quality or structure of experience: One should strive to account for ways in which 'the holy' is recognisably communicated to the Christian faithful through their Gospel ministers in the midst of their religious assembly. To be more precise, the ecumenist concerned about the body's vitality should seek to understand how power flows from the head to and through its members (cf. Col 1:18, 1 Cor 12:4 ff., Eph 1:22–3). The biblical theologian of Christian holiness and ministry should find his model in the Holy One of God (see John 6:69).

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