

No matter what "c" they call themselves severally by—church, community, collective, commune, cooperative—parachurches are sprouting "alongside" church/world, in double tangency and "para"lled to (and/or as a phase of) the communitarian groundswell of our time. This thinksheet has one purpose, viz. to provide one diagram—map for exploring the ecclesial options vis-a-vis "the Kingdom of God" (here, a catch-all for the Eschaton, idealism, utopianism, romanticism), "the world" (in double meaning: both created space available for human occupancy, and mankind to the extent it contents itself—its persons, powers, possessions, privileges, potentials—without deciding to begin to stop resisting the will of God as visible in the gospel story). Call it, if you will, a "Where are we?" geography of the Church (here, a comprehensive term for the whole Church, the local churches, the larger churches, the sects, the parachurches); it is also my current effort at a pathology of the Church, which is in sicknesses unto death/resurrection. With the situation so complex and protean, the arguability of my placements argues for, not against, the diagram: the process of arguing will surface insights, conscience, fresh possibilities, and of course hopefully better diagrams. And the unfinishedness encourages your treatment of it as a worksheet.

"A" is the Church in its nuclear-historic flow, both nucleus and bulk of slow-moving amoeba—orthodoxy, orthopraxy, orthocracy (in relation, respectively, to faith, ethos-ethic-life, and leadership-power)—repository-continuator of the holy memory and the holy hope in Abraham-Moses-Jesus—necessarily conservative, settled—sinning and repenting, believing afresh—the overlap of "the Kingdom of God" in "the world" (therefore, a mix of both and a beachhead-battlefield).

"B" is the ascetic parachurch, heady-utopian, despising "the body" of church and perhaps also world, but with the former despite dominating. (Cp. Manichaeism—Marcionite abhorrence of the flesh; and Monachism—Monasticism's individual and collective forms: the former, anchorite-eremitic—e.g., Antony; the latter, coenobitic-communal—e.g., Pachomius.)

"C" is the ecstatic parachurch, celebrating "the gifts" and spontaneity ("letting it happen," "unstructured," "charismatic, pentecostalist"). (Cp. Montanism, early Church "enthusiasm"). It's "esthetic" in the etymological sense. Even when heavily influenced by the human-potential movement, which is as much a secular version of this right-hemisphere, midbrain dominance in religion as Marxism is of left-hemisphere, neocortical religion, it tends to be pietist in the uncreative-uncritical sense, and therefore politically atavistic.

"D" is the legalistic parachurch (cp. Letter of James, and Tertullian). Donatistic purism, unable to avoid arrogance against the "impure," "unfaithful" church from which the group is drop-out. (On Left, law more than grace; contrast on Right, "B" above; and in Middle, see Clement of Alexandria.) (And see the three heresies Augustine fought: Manicheism—our type "B"; Donatism—our type "D"; and Pelagianism—our type "F.") Donatism, like Montanism, gave oodles of attention to "the Spirit."

"E" is the lax parachurch (as well as the "worldly" church), tending to luxury, like the early Church's Antinomians. It confuses liberation (a good) with conformism to the world (a sell-out, as much as "B" and "C" tend to be cop-outs). ("Common-sense," "pragmatic" sell-out, as unfaithful to the gospel as are the utopian, "real"—church cop-outs into "community.")

"F" is the action group gone amnesiac on its spiritual roots—secularity (in the good sense of being "in and for the world in Jesus' name") gone secularistic (the world as good in itself). (Cp. Pelagianism.)

"G" is the "spiritual group" gone mystic, usually with a little help from the East.

