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Editorial

Some farewell reflections on our theological task.

The three pillars of Christian theology—the doctrine of God, man in the image of God yet fallen and salvation in Jesus Christ—are fundamental to the making or doing of good theology. The task of theology is rightly to interpret the Word of God to contemporary man in society. This calls for a deep and sensitive understanding of both text and context. It demands serious study, unhurried fellowship with God, compassionate identification with people in their lostness and suffering and a commitment unto death to partnership in Christ's mission to the world. The greater the gifts received, the greater the opportunity for service and the greater our accountability to Christ for the Church and for the people to whom we are sent.

True theological reflection on these loci and their relationships can only take place in an atmosphere of ethical honesty and openness to the convicting and convincing work of the Holy Spirit. The library, the fellowship of the body of Christ and love for people imprisoned by sin and violence are all necessary environments in which to do our theological task. Theology which is only action/reflection will ultimately prove inadequate and false. Theology must also be Word/reflection. Where the hermeneutical process begins in the circle of interaction may not be important, but the direction of it is all-important. It must move from the givenness and finality of the Word to the relativity of man in his predicament. A spiral with a clear eschatological goal may be a more meaningful symbol than the Bultmannian hermeneutical circle.

As the Church of Jesus Christ spreads like leaven through the societies of those nations which have had little contact with the Gospel, the task of evangelism cannot be isolated from the total mission of Christ to the world. For a seed to burst into new life, it needs both suitable soil and the tender care of the gardener who manures and waters it. But new life is the gift of God; it cannot be manipulated by the skill of the technician. It is distressing that so much money, time and personal labour is devoted to evangelism with little concern for the values people hold dear or nurturing to the point of reproducing fruitfulness in the lives of those who receive the Gospel. Nobody lives in a social or religious vacuum and no-one can grow to Christian maturity apart from the fellowship of believers. Everybody who hears the Gospel receives it through culturally coloured glasses. Each instinctively absorbs it into his own world view and social system, or he rejects it as foreign, threatening or irrelevant. The Cross will always be a stumbling block or foolishness to those blinded by their own gods, but that is no excuse for cultural and religious insensitivity. It [p. 200](#) only points to the fact that salvation is by grace from beginning to end. It is the work of the Holy Spirit.

There are many signals of this false dichotomy in our mission today. One is the lack of awareness of kinship relationships and of history. To treat the hearer as an isolated individual not only blurs the male/female distinction, but also ignores the role of the extended family in the decision-making process and the role of clan/caste/class in shaping people's hopes and prejudices. Another sign is the tendency to either isolate or confuse the secular and the sacred. Cultures differ sharply in this matter. Even the committed Marxist has his sacred cows—the red book, an absolute ethic of justice and cultic messiahs. Christians brought up in a Western humanistic culture may be as unconscious of their Platonic or Renaissance roots as Hindus are of their philosophic monism or dualism. The result of this insensitivity or non-involvement is that we as evangelists, missionaries or theological educators continue to answer questions people are no longer asking. We don't relate our theology to people's felt needs or to their hidden

spiritual assumptions or to the holocaust-bound plight of the nations. We are living in the past which makes us feel secure and shields us from the perplexities of today's world and the agony of making moral choices.

At the same time, we must learn the lessons of history. How, for example, has the church in Egypt withstood the attack of Islam for fourteen centuries or how has the church in China multiplied 20 or 40 fold in the past 35 years without organized evangelism and with little para-church support? Evangelism is central to our theological task, but it must be neither isolated from nor merged with social action or the struggle for justice. Partnership is good, but marriage is better; it is commitment for life!

This issue of ERT focuses on salvation for man in society with several studies on the *imago dei* and the grace of God and continuing reflections on issues raised by Liberation Theologies. This process will be the central issue at the Theological Commission's triennial meetings and consultation in June 1986 in Singapore. The theme 'Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Liberator' goes to the heart issue of the relationship of justification to justice—redemption from sin to liberation from violence and oppression. Most liberation theologies are not radical enough; they fall short of the full biblical view of sin, the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption and liberation and the mission of the Church in the world.

The increasing millions of people who suffer from violence and oppression are also the majority of those who have never heard the Gospel. But, alas, they often block their ears to what they hear p.201 because what they see, the lifestyle of the witness and the materialism of a secularised church, is inconsistent with our words.

With this issue of ERT, your editor hands on the pen to others. My work as editor since Vol. 1 No. 1 in 1977 has been both challenging and rewarding. A special word of appreciation must go to my wife who has proofed every issue and made valuable comments on articles and especially on editorials! To contributors and readers alike, we say, Thank you.

As I step down from the leadership of the Theological Commission, my wife and I take up the call of God to pastoral ministry in the Delhi Diocese of the Church of North India. India has been our home for 31 years and we are looking to God to extend our time. Within the bounds of the 23 dioceses of the CNI live 1/10 of the world's population! The challenge to the Church is immense. We are committed to the affirmation of our Lord, 'I will build My Church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.' Pray for us, brethren, farewell. p. 202

Adam's Fall and God's Grace: John Wesley's Theological Anthropology

John Chongnahm Cho

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JOHN WESLEY—THE THEOLOGIAN

Dr. William Hordern, a Lutheran scholar, once said, 'I was raised on the assertion that Wesley had no theology and that he taught a religion of experience alone, but it is now evident that Wesley was a powerful theologian.'¹ He further observed that in recent years many Methodists have returned to Wesley and have rediscovered John Wesley as a great theologian.

At this point, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* by George C. Cell, which was published in 1915, made a recognizable contribution toward the rediscovery of Wesley as a theologian. Cell points out that Wesley was misunderstood as though he were of Liberal Arminianism, being far from the theology of the Reformers, and that he made so little contribution to the history of Christian thought. But through his study, Cell asserted that Wesley was rather reaffirming the main principles of the Reformers' theology and has overcome the decline of Christianity which was under the influence of the Enlightenment.² The theme of Cell has been well accepted and developed further by the later Wesleyan scholars.³

Skevington Wood writes, '*Sola gratia* and *sola fide* were the twin watchwords of the Reformation, and they found an echo in Wesley's preaching.'⁴ That is to say, Wesley regards the problem of the original sin very seriously. For Wesley 'the starting point of the Gospel is the total inability of the sinner to make the tiniest contribution toward his own salvation.'⁵ It is the interest of this paper to see how Wesley theologized the doctrine of *original sin*. What is the result of Adam's sin upon his descendants? What is the condition of fallen man in his relation to the gospel? [p. 203](#)

For Wesley to preach the whole council of God as it is revealed in the Bible, 'There must be a clear association of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.'⁶ This was Wesley's position. Then on what ground does Wesley maintain such a position concerning the fallen man? What is the methodology and dynamics of his theologizing?

ADAM'S SIN AND ITS EFFECTS UPON THE HUMAN RACE

Wesley believed that Adam was created in the image of God. God's image consisted of a threefold character: the natural, the political, and the moral image.⁷ Therefore, according to Wesley, the nature of man is spirit or soul, which includes endowment with the faculties of reason, will, and liberty. Man has the dominion over the lower creatures. Furthermore, man in his original condition lived in righteousness and true holiness. Man was full of love which was the sole principle of his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions.⁸ From the right

¹ William Hordern, 'Recent Trends in Systematic Theology' in *Canadian Journal of Theology*, vol. VIII (1961), No. 2, p. 87.

² George G. Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*, Nashville, Abingdon, 1946, pp. 5-9.

³ William Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, Nashville, Abingdon, 1946; H. Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification*, London, The Epworth Press, 1946.

⁴ Skevington Wood, *John Wesley: The Burning Heart*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1967, p. 220.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150, of *Works*, X, p. 456, 'Thoughts Concerning Gospel Ministers'.

⁷ *Standard Sermons of John Wesley* ed. by Sugden (hereinafter it will be referred to as STS), II, 228, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Jackson (it will be referred to hereafter as WORKS), IX, pp. 293, 355. Here it appears that Wesley accepted Isaac Watts' view in *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind*.

⁸ STS, II, 228.

use of all his faculties, man maintained a continued relationship of love and obedience to God.⁹

But Wesley believed that when Adam disobeyed God, he fell from the original state in which God created him. Wesley believed that this disobedience or rebellion of Adam was the result of the misuse of liberty and that the responsibility rests with Adam, not with God.¹⁰

In consequence of his rebellion, he lost the life of God. He was separated from Him in union with whom his spiritual life consisted.¹¹ Man's faculties of reason, will and liberty were then corrupted and man's love and obedience to God were replaced by self-love and self-will.¹²

Adam was primogenitor and the federal head of mankind, according to Wesley.¹³ Therefore, when Adam sinned, the effect was upon all human kind. For 'Adam's first sin was the sin of a public person' representing all his descendants.¹⁴ p. 204

Wesley believes that all men are therefore totally corrupt and children of wrath. Prior to any act of his own, each descendant of Adam shares in the depravity and guilt of the original sin. Wesley writes:

This is undoubtedly true, therefore God does not look upon infants as innocent, but as involved in the guilt of Adam's sin; otherwise death, the punishment denounced against that sin, could not be inflicted upon them.¹⁵

This view of John Wesley was made more clear when he was confronted with the opposition of John Taylor. In 1740 John Taylor published a treatise, *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination*. Taylor was a learned Presbyterian minister. He was the pastor of a church in Norwich. He was the first president of the Presbyterian Theological College at Warrington until his death in 1761. Taylor was leaning towards Socinianism and denied the original sin.¹⁶ Wesley was very upset and said, 'If Taylor is right, I cannot see that we have much need of Christianity.' There would then be no room to talk about salvation.¹⁷ In 1757 Wesley wrote a long treatise, *The Doctrine of Original Sin According to Scripture, Reason and Experience*.¹⁸ A part of this treatise was written in a sermonic form again in 1759, under the title, 'Original Sin'.¹⁹ In this treatise, Wesley refuted Taylor's position and maintained strongly both the corruption of human nature and the original guilt. Wesley writes:

⁹ WORKS, VI, 243 (sermon, 'The General Deliverance').

¹⁰ STS, II, 229, cf. WORKS, X, 468.

¹¹ STS, II, 229, STS, I, 117.

¹² STS, II, 229–230.

¹³ For Adam as the primogenitor, STS, II, 230, WORKS, V, 224, 247. For Adam as the federal head, WORKS, IX, 332, 427, 240.

¹⁴ WORKS, IX, 418.

¹⁵ WORKS, IX, 316.

¹⁶ STS, II, 207.

¹⁷ WORKS, IX, 194.

¹⁸ It is the 269 pages long treatise contained in the WORKS, IX.

¹⁹ See STS, II, 207ff.

'We were children of wrath by nature; we were born fallen creatures; we came into the world sinners, and as such, liable to wrath in consequence of the fall of our first father.'²⁰

'Children of wrath' here means that they are liable to some degree of wrath and punishment. Therefore, it involves the guilt of original sin. Wesley says, 'It is undeniable that guilt is imputed to all for the sin of Adam.'²¹ Wesley argues that the fact that all mankind in all ages have died, including infants themselves proves this, for 'none is liable to death, but for sin.'²² He further argues, if infants are not sinners how is Christ the Saviour of all men? If you deny that original sin of infants, p. 205 that death is the wages of sin, or that there is punishment without guilt, it would mean that 'God punishes innocent, guiltless creatures.'²³ Then it follows that infants are sinners; that they are lost, and without Christ, are undone forever.'²⁴

We notice that Wesley makes a pastoral distinction of the original sin; imputed guilt and inherent depravity. Wesley writes:

We have a clear evidence both of what the Divine terms, original sin imputed, and original sin inherent mean. The former is the sin of Adam, so far reckoned ours as to constitute us in some degree guilty; the latter, a want of original righteousness and a corruption of nature.'²⁵

Wesley also makes a distinction between the guilt of Adam and the original guilt of his descendants.

In one sense, indeed Adam's sin was not ours. It was not our personal fault, our actual transgression. But in another sense it was ours; it was the sin of our common representative: And, as such, St. Paul shows it is imputed to us and all his descendants.'²⁶

But to be sure, such distinction as Wesley makes should not be taken to mean that Wesley takes lightly the imputed guilt in mankind. Wesley believes that such a view which he expressed in his treatise is not only a truth agreeable to Scripture and reason, but a truth of the utmost importance.'²⁷ This is a truth, according to Wesley, known only to 'grace healed eyes,'²⁸ and the truth which the heathen and blind natural men do not discern.' Wesley thinks, 'none of them [heathens] know of his corruption.'²⁹ But as soon as God opens the eyes of their understanding, they see the state they were in before.'³⁰ He says,

²⁰ WORKS, IX, 419.

²¹ WORKS, IX, 426.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ WORKS, IX, 428.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ WORKS, IX, 420.

²⁶ WORKS, IX, 418.

²⁷ WORKS, IX, 429.

²⁸ Williams, Colin, W., *John Wesley's Theology Today*, New York, Abingdon, 1960, p. 52.

²⁹ STS, II, 222.

³⁰ STS, II, 215.

'This, therefore, is the first ground distinguishing point between Heathenism and Christianity.'³¹ This is Wesley's position.

How does Wesley then differ from the Calvinism of his day? Has he come to 'the very edge of Calvinism?'³² Another question is whether he maintains the consistency in his teaching on the original sin. Some interpreters of Wesley think that Wesley did not hold the guilt of p.206 original sin but only corruption of the nature. To answer these questions, more extended consideration must be given in the following pages.

FALLEN MAN IN THE STATE OF GRACE

Wesley usually begins his preaching of salvation with the condition of man. When he preached of 'justification by faith,' Wesley states:

Thus by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all man, as being contained in him who was the common father and representative of us all. For as by one man's disobedience all were made sinners, so by that offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation. In this state, we were, even all mankind, when God so loved the world, and He gave His only begotten Son.³³

Again when he preached on the New Birth, Wesley states:

And in Adam all die, all humankind, all the children of men who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every descendant from him comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God; void of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness wherein Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires ... the entire corruption of our nature.³⁴

Wesley concludes this first section of his sermon with this. This, then, is the foundation of new birth.³⁵

Hillman observes that it is 'Wesley's normal procedure in evangelistic preaching to establish the sinfulness of the hearers and on this basis to offer then the grace of God.'³⁶ Therefore, in Wesley, if the spiritual man finds favour with God, it is only by the Grace of God, but he believes that 'the process of salvation begins when he becomes conscious of his sinfulness with conviction of sin.'³⁷ Therefore Wesley in his sermon, 'The Way to the Kingdom,' preached that to enter into the Kingdom, first repent, that is, know yourselves. p. 207

Know thyself to be a sinner ...

³¹ STS, II, 215.

³² WORKS, VIII, 285.

³³ STS, I, 117–118, sermon, 'Justification by Faith' (1739), cf. STS, I, 37–38, 'Salvation by Faith' (1738).

³⁴ STS, II, 230–231, 'New Birth' (1740). See also STS, I, 268, 'The Circumcision of the Heart' (1733). STS II, 223, 'Original Sins' (1759).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Robert John Hillman, 'Grace in the Preaching of Calvin and Wesley', an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation at Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978, p. 63.

³⁷ Lindstrom, *ibid.*, p. 33.

Know that corruption of thy inmost nature, ...
Know that thou art corrupted in every power,
in every faculty of thy soul, that thou art
totally corrupted in every one of these ...
Such is the inbred corruption of the heart,
of thy very inmost nature.³⁸

We observe here that Wesley is, as Hillman points out, concerned to describe the present condition of the sinner rather than the original sin.³⁹ The question of the guilt of original sin and the idea of our original guilt imputed to man is not mentioned in his preaching.⁴⁰ This brings some questions to the mind of interpreters of Wesley. Would it mean then, that Wesley had an inconsistency in his teaching on original sin? Some of Wesley's interpreters thought that Wesley did not believe in the original guilt, but only the corruption of the nature. They thought Wesley maintained the guilt of personal sin only. They think that Wesley held partial depravity rather than total depravity by the fall. For Wesley mentioned elsewhere that part of the image of God (natural image) remained even after the fall.⁴¹

However, this writer thinks that such an interpretation is not just to Wesley. Wesley, I think, did not have inconsistency in his mind. To support this view, we must bear in mind that his treatise of the original sin, in which he strongly maintains the original guilt as well as total corruption of humankind by the fall, was written in a later year (1757) than the sermons. Moreover, we note that Wesley preached these sermons repeatedly in the 1750s. Wesley re-edited those sermons in his latter years, for example in 1771 and again in 1787–8, rearranging the order of sermons.⁴² But Wesley made no remarks anywhere on any change he made in his teaching. This seems to prove that in the mind of Wesley there was no change or inconsistency concerning the doctrine of original sin. Cox believes, 'It has not been proved that Wesley changed his mind.'⁴³ How should we then correlate these words which appear to be different? p. 208

'At this point,' Furchman says, 'it is necessary to point out that there is another view of man in Wesley's writings. Alongside his view of fallen man as totally corrupt and guilty of Adam's sin, he lays out his view of fallen man as seen in the state of grace.'⁴⁴ That is to say that Wesley presents the condition of man in a much milder way, saying some of the image of God even now is to be found in the worst of man.⁴⁵ No man, however primitive, ever

³⁸ STS, I, 156, 'The Way to the Kingdom' (1742).

³⁹ Hillman, *ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴⁰ Charles A. Rogers, 'The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley', an unpublished dissertation (Ph.D.) at Duke University, 1967, pp. 111–112.

⁴¹ WORKS, VI, 223, sermon, 'On the Fall of Man'.

⁴² See STS II, 208f., II 226.

⁴³ Cox, Leo, *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection*, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1964, p. 29. Wesley often made some remarks when he changed his view in his life. For example, see STS, I, 269 (The Circumcision of the hearts, on faith), sermon on 'Faith' I:11 (of the faith of the servant), Letters V, 358–359 (March 1768 on the assurance of faith). Note also that Wesley published these sermons (New Birth, Original Sin) in 1760 in the 4th volume.

⁴⁴ Eldon R. Furchman, 'The Wesleyan Doctrine of Grace in the Theology of John Wesley', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation at State University of Iowa, 1963, p. 105.

⁴⁵ WORKS, VI, 223, 'On the Fall of Man'.

existed without a measure of free will; man is morally responsible for his actions.⁴⁶ Wesley presupposes that he is already in the state of grace, namely under the operation of the prevenient grace. As Cox says, 'Wesley saw fallen man as living, not now under a covenant of works, but under a covenant of grace,'⁴⁷ because of the grace of God whence our salvation is free in all and free for all.⁴⁸ Therefore, Furhman points out, as opposed as these viewpoints seem to be, Wesley correlates them with his idea of prevenient grace. Wesley would not see opposition between the two, but on the contrary, the closest connection.⁴⁹ Wesley must have presupposed when he preached, that the fallen man is already the recipient of God's grace—prevenient grace. For Wesley believes that 'by preventing grace the guilt of original sin is cancelled.' 'By the righteousness of Christ the original guilt is cancelled as soon as men are sent into the world.'⁵⁰ 'There is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man.'⁵¹

It seems important therefore for us to observe, as Robert E. Cushman points out, that Wesley makes no sharp divorcement between nature and grace in his description of the fallen man because man's whole existence is enveloped by the wooing activity of God. Nevertheless the distinction between nature and grace in fallen man is not dissolved.⁵² p. 209 To state this in another way, in Wesley, as Rogers says, 'While nature and grace are thus distinct Wesley conceives them to be in an intimate and complementary relationship in a vital and functional unity.'⁵³ This approach appears to be a characteristic of Wesley's theologizing. Chiles says that in Wesley's view of Original sin, the 'irreconcilable tension' between sin and grace forms the bedrock of his theology. This is the dynamics of Wesley's theologizing. And if this is neglected, interpretation of Wesley's position inevitably becomes ambiguous or compromising, being unjust to Wesley.⁵⁴

We mentioned earlier that at the close of the nineteenth century, some Wesleyan students rejected original guilt. It appears that they came to reject original guilt because they tended to view man's responsive freedom in an anthropological rather than a soteriological setting. They departed from Wesley in their theological methodology, so as to reach another conclusion.⁵⁵

THE DYNAMICS OF WESLEY'S THEOLOGY

⁴⁶ WORKS, X, 457–459 'Thoughts Upon Necessity'.

⁴⁷ Leo Cox, *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection*, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1964, p. 31.

⁴⁸ WORKS, VII, 373, 'Free Grace'.

⁴⁹ Wesley's such argument is also well revealed in his sermon 'On Working Out Our Own Salvation', in WORKS, VI, 506–513.

⁵⁰ Letters, VI, 240, cf. WORKS, VIII, 277, IX, 303.

⁵¹ WORKS, X, 230. Also see, WORKS, X, 392, 'Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's Review of All the Doctrines Taught by John Wesley'.

⁵² Robert Cushman, 'Salvation for all: Wesley and Calvinism', in *Methodism*, ed. by W. K. Anderson, Nashville, The Methodist Publishing House, 1947, p. 110.

⁵³ Rogers, *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵⁴ Chiles, *ibid.*, p. 120–121.

⁵⁵ Some examples of this departure among Wesleyan students such as Watson, and Knudson are shown in Chiles' book, *ibid.*, p. 124ff.

We have observed that Wesley's main thrust in his preaching is to declare the saving grace of God, the whole counsel of God, and anthropology is the existential reference. Therefore, Wesley's doctrine of the fallen man, as Lindstrom noted, is necessarily linked up With the essential purpose of the Gospel, which is from God's grace instead of from man's free-will.⁵⁶ As Starkey pointed out, 'soteriology is prior to anthropology in Wesley.'⁵⁷ Wesley develops the doctrine of the fallen man in the soteriological setting. At this point, his idea of prevenient grace takes a very important role, but it is not the interest of this paper to discuss his doctrine of prevenient grace.

We have also observed that in his view of the fallen man, Wesley maintains the total depravity of human nature and the original guilt by the fall of Adam. He is with Paul and Augustine on this. At this point there is widespread agreement among interpreters of Wesley's theology.⁵⁸ But this collective approach is combined in Wesley with p. 210 the individual approach (in which he maintains that each individual is also responsible), with his idea of prevenient grace. In this approach, Wesley makes no sharp divorcement between nature and grace in the fallen man, but he keeps the tension between assertion of sin and the promptings of grace. Wesley finds the dynamics of his theologizing in the irreconcilable tension which he maintains between the assertion of sin and the promptings of the grace of God, with his idea of preventing grace. Therefore, Wesley interprets in a uniquely significant way the man *coram deo*, because he views the fallen man as sinner because of Adam, at the same time as the recipient of grace because of Christ.

Such an approach by Wesley reveals its significance when it is applied to the relationship between God's grace and man's responsibility for salvation. At this point, I think Wesley makes a significant contribution to theology. Wesley in his sermon, 'On Working Out Our Own Salvation,' based on the text, [Phil. 2:12-13](#), maintains the idea of *sola gratia* and total depravity of the fallen man. He says, without God it is not possible for man to do anything well. But Wesley at the same time maintains that man is able to work and man must be responsible since God works in man.

Yea, it is impossible for any man, for any that is born of a woman, unless God worketh in him.

Seeing all men are by nature, not only sick, but dead in trespasses and in sins, it is not possible for them to do anything well till God raises them from the dead ... Yet this is no excuse for those who continue in sin ... For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none. Seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God ... You can do something, through Christ strengthening you.⁵⁹

Thus Wesley is able to maintain man's responsibility for his own salvation, without falling into Pelagianism. At the same time, Wesley does not fall into the difficulty which Augustinianism and Calvinism enter. The working relationship between God's grace and man, in Wesley, is also distinguished from the synergism of the Roman Catholic semi-

⁵⁶ Lindstrom, *ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵⁷ L. Starkey, 'The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of John Wesley', an Unpublished Ph D. dissertation at Columbia University, 1953, p. 200.

⁵⁸ See W. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, p. 200ff. Robert E. Cushman, 'Salvation for All' in *Methodism* ed. by W. K. Anderson, pp. 106-8. Lindstrom, *ibid.*, p. 12. L. Starkey Jr., *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 124ff. George G. Cell, *ibid.*, p. 25, 272. Chiles, *ibid.*, p. 119. Furfman, *ibid.*, p. 105. Leo Cox, *ibid.*, p. 29, 47.

⁵⁹ WORKS, VI, 512-513.

pelagianism. For in Wesley, 'First God works; therefore you can work.'⁶⁰ Cox calls Wesley's view synergism in the framework of monergism.⁶¹ L. Starkey calls it 'evangelical synergism.'⁶² Wesley is able to hold such a view because of the dynamics of his theologizing which we observed. Wesley is able to solve the difficulty of the [p. 211](#) theologians of grace, like the Reformers Augustine and Barth, even emphasizing the *sola gratia*.

Moreover, it would not be difficult for us to apprehend that it was this methodology and position which made Wesley safeguard the doctrine of the fallen man from the teaching of 'stillness' of the Moravianism of his day, on the one hand, and from the teaching of 'good works' of the Roman Catholic Church on the other.

It seems also true that when this approach is applied to the doctrine of Christian life, it makes a constructive contribution. We note that Wesley is able to safeguard the doctrine of Christian life from both a shallow view of sin and pessimism concerning nature. For in Wesley Christian life is not understood as a smooth movement, like a train moving on the tracks, not taking seriously the sin problem. Wesley was conscious of the grave result of even the unconscious sin occasioned by the infirmities in the sanctified.⁶³ Therefore, in Wesley repentance of believers is fully necessary. On the other hand, he was not pessimistic because of the gravity of sin, but he was optimistic of Christian life because of the promptings of God's grace, the blood of the atonement of Christ 'continually applied' for His children who depend on 'His intercession for us.'⁶⁴ This theological approach is well reflected in his sermon, 'The Repentance of Believers' which was written in 1767. We could easily observe that an underlying presupposition of Wesley's theology here is the emphasis on the grace—'where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,'⁶⁵ and this is made in the dialectical tension between the assertion of sin and the promptings of grace. This is the dynamics of his theologizing. Therefore, in Wesley salvation of man begins with the grace of God and is maintained by grace, and will be completed by the grace of God. Man however, is responsible only 'if the time and opportunity is given.'⁶⁶ For the rest, it is God who does the work for man, so long as man is in a faith relationship with Christ, the High Priest. Wesley preaches:

Thus it is, that in the children of God, repentance and faith exactly answer each other. By repentance we feel the sin remaining in our hearts and cleaving to our words and actions. By faith, we receive the power of God in [p. 212](#) Christ, purifying our hearts, cleansing our hands. By repentance we are still sensible that we deserve punishment for all our tempers, and words, and actions; by faith, we are conscious that our Advocate with the Father is continually turning aside all condemnation and punishment from us. Repentance says,

⁶⁰ WORKS, VI, p. 511.

⁶¹ Cox, *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶² Starkey, *ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶³ STS, II, 389, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* by Wesley, p. 52.

⁶⁴ STS, II, 393.

⁶⁵ [Rom. 5:20](#), see WORKS IX, 303.

⁶⁶ STS, II, 456, 'Scripture Way of Salvation'. Here Wesley says, 'Fruits (of repentance) ... are only necessary conditionally, if there be time and opportunity for them; otherwise a man may be sanctified without them.'

‘without Him I can do nothing.’ Faith says, ‘I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.’⁶⁷

Thus, in Wesley, ‘the repentance (i.e. the assertion of sin) and faith (i.e. the assertion of grace) are full as necessary, in order for our continuance and growth in grace ... to our entering into the Kingdom.’⁶⁸ But to be sure, in Wesley, he keeps this tension with much more emphasis on the grace, for ‘where sin increased, grace abounded all the more’ ([Rom. 5:20](#)). Here is the optimism of grace in Wesley which supercedes the pessimism of sin, nature,⁶⁹ wherein Wesley is to be distinguished from Luther and the neo-Reformation theologians. Their doctrine of fallen man often tends to view the Christian life as a constant struggle between sin and grace, *simul justus et peccator* or as ‘impossible possibility.’

Furthermore, we would note some significant contributions that Wesley could make in the contemporary theological enterprises, when his approach and position is applied. For example, Wesley’s position of the fallen man would offer a constructive help toward the theology of mission.

First of all, Wesley’s theology would insist on the universal need of salvation by God’s grace because of his assertion of the depth and universality of man’s sin, and on the other hand, emphasize the possibility and hope of salvation for all men, because of his assertion of the free grace of God in all and for all. But, in doing so, Wesley’s theology would safeguard the doctrine of salvation by grace alone from the danger of both Universalism and divine determinism, because it is Wesley’s position that maintains the responsibility in the fallen man who is already in the state of grace. Thus, in Wesley, the hope of salvation for all men is emphasized and yet the responsibility of man, and the Church’s mission is equally stressed. In this way, Wesley’s theology would bring a welcome relief in the soundly biblical deliverance from the dilemma which resides in the house of Luther and Barthian theology.

Secondly, Wesley’s position would bring another welcome contribution in the search for a solution from the dilemma at the issue of the [p. 213](#) point of contact; continuity or discontinuity between God (the Gospel) and man (culture) in mission. It appears that there is a dilemma in the theology of mission because if one maintains the continuity between God and man, it often tends to identify nature and grace as do romanticists, pantheists, deists and modern liberal humanists; on the other hand, when one maintains the discontinuity between the two, as do the Reformers, Barthians and Kraemer, it leads to an impasse in his finding the point of contact, dialogue and the ground for apologetic approach in mission. This is a perennial issue in the cross cultural mission. But, when we are true to Wesley’s position and approach, a healthy solution to this dilemma will be found. For Wesley’s approach is not either/or in its abstract inference, but ‘both/and,’ a correlation of the two into a creative synthesis, keeping a dialectical tension between grace and nature.

So keeping the tension (discontinuity) between God and man, Wesley finds the point of contact in terms of the work of grace which is initiated by God and already operative in the fallen man. By doing so, Wesley, without identifying nature with grace, provides the point of contact in mission, and moreover his theology gives hope and encouragement in mission because it finds the ground of mission in the operation of God’s grace in the world.

⁶⁷ STS, II, 394.

⁶⁸ STS, II, 380. The words in the parenthesis are mine.

⁶⁹ Williams, *ibid.*, p. 190.

Thus, Wesley's position, when true to its own dynamics of theologizing, will provide a respectable, relevant solution to the contemporary theology of mission.

It may be reasonably assumed that Wesley's approach and position will also provide constructive contributions in other contemporary theological frontiers. This represents a challenge to, and responsibility of the students of Wesley today and in the future.

Dr. Chongnam Cho is a Senior University Chaplain, Dean of Seoul Campus College, Myongji University in South Korea and is a former member of the Theological Commission. p. 214

Imago Dei and Church Order

Leroy S. Capper

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The crowning act of the creative work of God was his creation of man in his own image:

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

**So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.**

([Gen. 1:26, 27](#))

It is his being in the image of God which distinguishes man from all the rest of God's creation and gives him an elevated status, and it is the fact of his being in the image of God which serves as the basis for human ethics (cf. [Gen. 9:6](#)). In recent years a particular view of the nature of the image, first suggested by Karl Barth, has been urged by Paul K. Jewett as the basis for sexual egalitarianism in the ministry and offices of the church (finding written expression in his work *Man as Male and Female*). From this perspective 'the image of God' has primary reference not to individual men or women but to man(kind) as male and female. It is our purpose here first to examine whether such a view of the *imago dei* has a biblical foundation and then to determine whether such a view leads to the dismissal of the role distinctions traditionally recognized as biblical and practised in the Christian Church.

Our first task is to consider the nature of the image of God in man. Prior to the Reformation there was a tendency to distinguish between 'image' and 'likeness' and in this distinction to find some indication of what the image consists of. For Irenaeus and Tertullian, the distinction was between bodily and spiritual traits; for Clement of Alexandria and many following him, the distinction was between those qualities essential to man as man, and those qualities not essential to man, which could be cultivated or lost. The Reformers and most scholars since have rejected such distinctions, seeing 'image' and 'likeness' as two almost (if not entirely) synonymous words giving full expression to the single concept of 'the very image of God'. For Luther, this image consisted solely of original

righteousness which was lost at the fall, but for Calvin and the Reformed tradition the image of God also encompassed those qualities which distinguished man from the animal world, such as rationality, self-consciousness and emotion. To this has [p. 215](#) also sometimes been added the dominion of man over the world. The common element to all these aspects of the divine image is that they relate the divine image to man in terms of his being (*ousia*). For Barth, however, the divine image in man is interpreted in terms of relationship (*relationis*), male to female. Having concluded in agreement with traditional orthodoxy that the use of the plural verb and pronouns in [Genesis 1:26](#) points to ‘a genuine plurality in the divine essence’¹ and noticing that parallel structure of [1:27](#), in which ‘image of God’ in lines one and two is parallel to ‘male and female’ in line three, Barth finds ‘a clear and simple correspondence, an *analogia relationis*, between this mark of the divine being, namely, that it includes an I and a Thou, and the being of man, male and female.’² As succinctly described by Berkouwer, for Barth ‘the relation between “I” and “Thou” which is already present in God (“let us make man in our image”) finds its creaturely analogue in the relation between man and woman.’³ Is the image of God thus to be understood relationally or is it instead to be understood in terms of man’s being?

IMAGO DEI: BEING OR RELATIONAL?

In the estimation of the present writer, the answer is not to be found in either one of these views in distinction from the other, but rather in both of them. The traditional view certainly has much to commend it. The *imago dei* clearly includes more than the original righteousness lost at the fall, because the image is clearly present in man after the fall ([Gen 9 6](#), [Jas. 3:9](#)). Those natural endowments such as rationality, and self-consciousness thus do seem to be an integral part of the image of God. Laidlaw even suggests that the elements of man’s personality as part of the *imago dei* are implied in the text of the creation account:

The God who is essentially three in one, an inter-linked personality—this God alone furnishes the mould on which personality could be formed. Thus we seem to get a full meaning to those words, ‘Let US make man in OUR image after OUR likeness’ ... In the light of the entire biblical delineation of God, the words have no strain put upon them, but are only seen to be divinely pregnant, if we hold them as now indicating to us that man was created an image of something *inter-trinitarian* ... the inter-trinitarian [p. 216](#) relations of Godhead find a copy in man’s personality, as related to God on the one hand and to his fellow-men on the other.⁴

Man’s personality is an integral part of the image of God in man. Thus there does seem to be an aspect of God’s image resident in the individual.

It is these same plurals in [Genesis 1:26](#) which led Laidlaw to focus on personality, however, which stimulated Barth to conceive of the image relationally. This interpretation of the image seems compelling, because the only point in the creation narrative at which the plurals are employed is at the creation of man. The significance of man’s creation is heightened by God’s taking counsel with himself (rather than by simple fiat) as well as by

¹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. III, Part 1: *The Doctrine of Creation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), p. 191.

² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

³ G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 73.

⁴ John Laidlaw, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1879), pp. 128–129.

the thrice repeated use of the strong word for 'create', *bara*, in verse [27](#).⁵ The account could have read, 'I will make a man in my image', but it does not. Linking the plurality to the angels makes no sense, for the sovereign God consults no one in his plans (cf. [Isa. 40:14](#)) and nowhere does the Bible speak of man being in the image of angels. Some argue for a plural of majesty here; while this may explain the plurality in the name of God (*'elohim*), it is not so likely with regard to the plural cohortative ('let us make') and the plural pronominal suffixes, and G. C. Aalders even goes so far as to reject the entire concept:

... this is impossible because the Hebrew does not have such a use of the plural ... It would seem most acceptable to hold to the interpretation advanced by the ancient church fathers and universally accepted by scholars of the past, that this is a reference to the Triune God. It goes without saying that this passage, standing by itself, would not constitute a clear proof of the Trinity. There is, for instance, no mention of three here. But what is indicated here is that God, in His unity, has a certain plurality.⁶

This strong suggestion of plurality within the Godhead in verse [26](#) forms the immediate context of verse [27](#). Verse [27](#) itself has three parallel lines, with lines one and two virtually identical except for a reversed word order in line two. The significant factor is that 'image of God' in lines one and two is paralleled in line three by 'male and female'. Furthermore, as Von Rad observes, in line one 'the Hebrew word "*adam*" ("man") is a collective and is therefore never used in the plural; it means literally "mankind".'⁷ The singular pronoun 'him' in [p. 217](#) line two is governed by the singularity of the collective noun. Thus rather than the traditional understanding that God created individual men in his image and individual women in his image, the passage suggests that the plurality-in-unity God created the *one* mankind in his image with the *plurality* of genders. It must be admitted that the similar use of '*adam*' in [Genesis 5:1](#) includes both male and female,⁸ and such usage cannot be denied here. Also, in [Genesis 5:2](#) God names the male *and* female 'man' (*'adam*), indicating that 'though the male, as head, bore the name of the race, it takes the two sexes together to express what God means by human'.⁹ This last point is certainly implied in [Genesis 1:27](#), since mankind is in God's image as male and female, and is clearly confirmed in [Genesis 2:18](#), where God declares that man by himself was 'not good' and that a suitable helper was needed for him. Man as male was incomplete without the woman; the woman, created to correspond to the man, would be incomplete without him. Thus, the male and female complement one another to express the full meaning of what it is to be man(kind). Prior to the creation of Eve, it must thus be said that Adam both *was* (in regard to being) and *was not* (relationally) in the image of God. It takes both the male and the female to reflect fully the image of God. This corresponding complementary relationship implies the equality of the sexes which was previously established in their equally being image bearers. As further demonstration of the equality, it is to the male and female together, that is, to mankind (*'adam*) that God gave dominion over the rest of creation in [Genesis 1:26, 28](#). Some have included dominion as part of the image of God, yet it seems more likely to this writer that dominion is a consequence of man being in the image of God,

⁵ James Orr, *God's Image in Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 36ff.

⁶ G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, 2 Vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 1:70.

⁷ Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis* (London: SCM, 1961), p. 55.

⁸ Aalders, p. 138.

⁹ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1967), p. 80.

rather than an aspect of it. Dominion is a blessing given to man who is already *imago dei*. The structure of verse [26](#), with the jussive joined by a *waw* to the cohortative ‘Let us make’, also suggests this. Per Gesenius, a jussive joined by a *waw* to a preceding cohortative expresses in the jussive an intention depending on the contingent occurrence of the event expressed in the cohortative.¹⁰ This is not to diminish the fact, however, that joint dominion implies and confirms the equality of the sexes.

At the same time, however, it also seems that man as male and female in the image of the plurality-in-unity God also implies that a [p. 218](#) certain order and distinction exists within the Godhead. The light of later revelation shows that within the Godhead there are three persons: Father, Son and Spirit. These three persons are the same in essence and each is equally and fully God. Yet the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit. It is the Father who sent the Son ([John 20:21](#)) and the Son came to do not his own will, but the will of the Father ([John 5:30](#)). The Spirit who proceeds from the Father is sent by the Son to bear witness to the Son ([John 15:26](#)). The equality of the persons of the Godhead does not negate an order of function among them. It is a harmonious order, to be sure, but an order nevertheless. If, then, the Godhead consists of a plurality of persons in an ordered harmony, mankind who is imaging God can also be expected to have a harmonious order amidst the plurality of male and female.

This is not reading New Testament doctrine back into the text of Genesis, because the doctrine of the Trinity, while not fully developed, is certainly indicated through the plurals of [Genesis 1:26](#) as has already been shown. Moreover, when the summary of man’s creation in [Genesis 1](#) is expanded by the details of [Genesis 2](#), it is very clear that male and female exist in an ordered relationship. The man is created first and with him God made the Covenant of Works. It is later than the woman is created. Being formed from the same substance as the man (out of his rib) indicates an equality between them, but at the same time it must be noted that the woman was formed out of his previously existing substance and brought to him as one corresponding to him, and not vice versa (cf. [1 Cor. 11:8, 9](#)). It is not that one lump of clay was divided into two parts so that the male and female simultaneously appeared. This order is heightened when in verse [23](#) the man names the female ‘woman’, because ‘to give a name is the prerogative of a superior’.¹¹ By these actions man is clearly delineated the head. God created man as male and female, a plurality of persons imaging God both in their plurality-in-unity and in their ordered harmony.

In this way the *imago dei* is seen not only to involve the *being* of an individual human but also the *relationships* of the human community as well, being demonstrated most specifically in the male/female relationship. Bromiley was quite right to criticize Barth for negating the former in expressing the latter. He notes that the male-female distinction is not uniquely human but is also present in animals ([Gen. 6:19; 7:2–3](#)) ‘and therefore the endowment of rationality, volition and ethical sense is still necessary for human intra-personal relationship in [p. 219](#) the image of the divine. Barth has to assume this aspect of the *imago* even though he may be right in giving a slightly different emphasis or focus’.¹² This willingness on the part of Bromiley to recognize both analogy of being as well as analogy of relationship to the *imago dei* captures the proper balance which the Scripture itself seems to indicate. This will hopefully become more clear as we turn to consider the view of G. C. Berkouwer set forth in his work *Man: The Image of God*.

¹⁰ E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), p. 322.

¹¹ J. A. Motyer, ‘Name’, *New Bible Dictionary*, 1962, p. 862.

¹² G. W. Bromiley, ‘Image of God’, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1982, rev. ed., II:804.

IMAGO DEI AND NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Berkouwer himself rejects the image as an analogy of relation, claiming that Barth is ambiguous when he 'sees the image lying in the distinction between man and woman (I-thou; partnership) and at the same time says that it lies in the distinction and relation between man and fellow man (I-thou; community).'¹³ Instead he wishes to emphasize 'the importance of the biblical witness to Christ as the image of God and to the renewal, in communion with Christ, of man according to that image.'¹⁴ This concept of the relationship between the *imago dei* and the new man in Christ that is so significant for Berkouwer has its roots in the thinking of John Calvin. In his commentary on [Genesis 1:26](#), Calvin presented a framework for understanding the *imago dei* that has significantly influenced all subsequent discussion of the image, including that of Berkouwer. It has rightly been referred to as a 'restoration hermeneutic',¹⁵ in view of the fact that it seeks to understand the image in terms of that to which man is restored after the Fall. In Calvin's own words:

Since the image of God has been destroyed in us by the fall, we may judge from its restoration what it originally had been. Paul says that we are transformed into the image of God by the gospel. And according to him, spiritual regeneration is nothing else than the restoration of the same image. ([Col. 3:10](#) and [Eph 4:23](#))¹⁶

This aspect of the image is often referred to as 'original righteousness' and is derived from the verses Calvin mentioned above: [Colossians 3:10](#) and [Ephesians 4:22-24](#). This 'knowledge, righteousness and holiness' is considered to be a chief part of God's image in man p. 220 (though these terms in themselves are understood by Calvin to be a synecdoche and thus not expressive of the totality of the image).¹⁷ Both texts mentioned above are in the context of discussion of the new man in Christ and both relate the newness of life to God and his image. [Colossians 3:10](#) especially seems to deliberately echo the [Genesis 1](#) account: 'put on the new man who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him' (emphasis mine). This close relationship between the *imago dei* and the new man has gained almost universal recognition; that the knowledge, righteousness and holiness spoken of in reference to the new man is an aspect of the *imago dei* (though now distorted by the fall) seems indisputable. While it is wise to remember Calvin's caution that this original righteousness may not constitute the whole of the image, Berkouwer is correct to focus on this connection.

It is important to note, however, that the newness of life is something reflected in the community as well as in the individual. Berkouwer himself is very conscious of the significance of the *imago dei* for the community. In commenting on [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) he states:

When reference is in fact made to a 'reflection' of God's glory, it is clear that such reference is in the context of the transformation, the becoming similar to Christ, the continuous renewing of life ... This transformation is eschatologically oriented, but is nevertheless

¹³ Berkouwer, p. 77.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁵ Robert L. Reymond, class lecture, 4/6/83.

¹⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2 Vols., reprint in 1 vol. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 1:94.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

already actual in principle, and it becomes *manifest in the community*, which is a readable epistle of Christ. The relationship between the image of God and newness of life, indeed the identity of the image and the concretely visible sanctification, in which the glory of the Lord becomes evident to all is unmistakable (emphasis mine).¹⁸

In fact, much of Berkouwer's analysis in relating the image of God to newness of life is filled with discussion of the implications of the new life for the Christian community.¹⁹

This is not unexpected; both [Colossians 3:10](#) and [Ephesians 4:22–24](#) are directed to churches. Having already been instructed to put off the 'old man', the plurality of people which constitute the church are commanded to put on the 'new man' with the already-mentioned image qualities. Each passage then immediately follows with instructions concerning how these qualities are practically to work out in the relationships within the Christian community (e.g., 'speak truthfully to [p. 221](#) his neighbour' [Eph. 4:25](#), 'bearing with one another and forgiving each other' [Col. 3:13](#), cf. [Eph. 4:32](#)). These sections on conduct within the Christian community are concluded by instructions concerning role distinctions that are to be followed by the community ([Eph. 5:22ff](#), [Col. 3:18ff](#)). These sections on role distinctions, however, are set in the context of statements concerning the equality of the members of the redeemed community ([Eph. 5:21](#), [Col. 3:11](#)). Thus the image qualities are related to a newness of life which impinges on individual believers as well as the Christian community, a community wherein members are both equal and distinct from each other.

MALE-FEMALE DISTINCTION IN *IMAGO DEI*

As was noted above, Berkouwer gives credence to the relationship between the new life and community as well as to the identity of the image with the new life. This seems to support the concept of a relational aspect of the *imago dei*, but Berkouwer tries to avoid including community within the image by indicating that the newness of life in the community is a consequence of the new life of the individual. Yet he admits that community is included in the image of God.

In this (new) life, the image of God becomes visible. The New Testament sheds the fullness of its light on the newness of this life, and it appears that this newness does not merely refer to a new aspect in the life of an individual but that it includes and indeed brings about the community.²⁰

This is a significant (though probably inadvertent) admission on the part of one so adamantly opposed to *relationis* in the divine image. When one considers, however, how tightly woven together the concepts of image, newness of life and community are in [Colossians 3](#) and [Ephesians 4–5](#), it should not be so surprising. The focus on the newness of community relationships seems too comprehensive to be merely the effect of the renewal of individuals. Even if one were to make such an argument, the incompleteness ('not-good'-ness) of the male by himself in [Genesis 2:18](#) in the context of the complementary nature of male and female as the image of God in [Genesis 1:27](#) would still seem to be left unexplained. The biblical data does seem to support within the image the concept of relation.

¹⁸ Berkouwer, pp. 111–112.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98ff.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Berkouwer's objection that ambiguity between the male/female relation and the man-fellow man relation prohibits inclusion of the [p. 222](#) idea of relation in the image does not seem valid on two counts. First, as we have seen above, the Apostle Paul seems to move between man-fellow man and male-female quite easily in his discussion of image. In fact, after calling on the church to put on the new man created in the image of God, he first deals with general community relationships before discussing male-female relationships. That Paul can so easily move between these kinds of relationships suggests that while the male-female relation is the most fundamental of those human relationships which image the plurality-in-unity God, the male-male and female-female relations are also included, though not specifically stated. This is the second counter to Berkouwer's objection. If this is not so, then all that would be necessary for the church to image God is for the men to be in proper relation to the women. As long as strife or gossip or broken relationships existed only among members of one sex, the image of God would be preserved. This is absurd, of course. Berkouwer's objection of ambiguity is not a valid objection to the presence of relation in the *imago dei*.

More recently Philip Hughes has attacked Barth's view that the image involves the distinction between male and female. He objects to Barth's view on the following grounds: 1. animals also were created male and female, 2. this would imply sexual distinctions in the Godhead, 3. Jesus was fully human yet never married, 4. marriage is abolished in the eternal state ([Matt. 22:30](#)), 5. Christians are said to be conformed to Christ's image and likeness ([Rom. 8:29](#); [2 Cor. 3:18](#)) and not to that of the Trinity.²¹

In response, it must first be noted that this paper does not advocate, as does Barth, relationship as expressed in 'male and female' as the exclusive aspect of image. It is, however, argued to be an important usually overlooked aspect of image, to be held in conjunction with the being aspects of image such as righteousness and holiness. In this respect this writer differs very little from J. I. Packer, who, while not extensively developing the idea, does include 'community' (based upon the plurals of [Gen. 1:26](#)) as one of the key aspects of the *imago dei*.²² Furthermore, the fact that God uses the gender distinction among men to mirror an ordered relationship within the Godhead does not require gender within the Godhead itself. It is a relation between distinct persons which is being imaged. That gender is the distinction among men does not necessitate that gender be the [p. 223](#) distinction within the Godhead. That animals are also male and female is irrelevant. It is *man* as male and female which is in the image of God. The creation account makes no mention of gender in the animals, but does focus on the gender distinction in mankind. The presence of sub-human gender distinctions does not negate the image quality of human gender distinctions, because it is in the *human* male and female that God has chosen to image himself.

Since it is the male-female relationship in [Gen. 1:26](#) which images God, the absence of marriage cannot be counted against this view, because male-female relationships can clearly be in a harmonious ordered relationship apart from marriage and procreation. Marriage, while certainly affording a tremendous opportunity for a man and woman to image God, is by no means at any place stated to be a necessary aspect of the image. Jesus himself as a single man is the greatest demonstration of this fact. Man and woman in relationship is sufficient to image God apart from the bond of marriage.

Hughes' final objection on the basis of the statements of Scripture which speak of the Christian being conformed to the image of Christ can also be readily answered. The

²¹ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Christian Ethics in Secular Society* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), pp. 149–151.

²² J. I. Packer, *Knowing Man* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone, 1979), pp. 30–31.

statements of Scripture are not in dispute. What needs to be considered, however, is whether the intent of those passages is to give a complete exposition of what the image is and means. In the estimation of this writer this does not seem to be the case. [Romans 8:29](#) and [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) seem to concern themselves with the being and character of the individual, and not the relationships between male and female per se (though the being will admittedly have an effect on their relationships). A man or woman should be conformed to the image of Christ as he presents his being and character. These passages, however, are silent with regard to the relationship aspect of image, a silence born not out of opposition to the concept presented here, but rather a silence due to the limited intent of the passages themselves.

Thus that aspect of Barth's development of the doctrine of the *imago dei* which suggests an analogy of relation, that it is man as male and female which is the image of God, seems to be a valid and fair assessment of biblical teaching. With this conclusion Paul Jewett stands in complete agreement.²³ But from this he concludes that 'the theology of Man as male and female ... is inimical to a doctrine of sexual hierarchy. The basic thrust of that theology is rather one of a fellowship of equals under God.'²⁴ This fellowship of equals is p. 224 reasserted in [Galatians 3:28](#) and therefore, Jewett urges, women ought not to be kept from the offices of the church.²⁵

AN ORDERED HARMONY

This reasoning depends on two premises: that [Genesis 1](#) teaches only an equality of sexes, and that subordination equals inferiority. Yet both of these premises are inaccurate. As was shown above, man as male and female in the image of God conveys not only a sense of equality but of order as well. As the Son, who is equally God with the Father, submits to the Father's will, so also the plurality of mankind can be expected to reflect a similar order among the sexes without losing the equality between the sexes. Subordination does not equal inferiority and [Genesis 1](#) does in fact allow for role relationships of male and female. According to Jewett, Paul's discussion of female subordination is drawn solely from [Genesis 2](#) which could be read to imply subordination, but which should be read—according to Jewett—only in terms of the equality of [Genesis 1](#). Thus subordination is due to a rabbinical tendency not to read [Genesis 2](#) in the context of [Genesis 1](#).²⁶ Quite the opposite appears to be true. [Genesis 2](#) speaks of subordination amidst equality *because* [Genesis 1](#) establishes man as male and female as analogous to the ordered Trinity-in-Unity Godhead. Paul may refer directly to the words of [Genesis 2](#), but these words are in accord with the teaching of [Genesis 1](#). It is not Paul the Apostle who misreads [Genesis 2](#); it is Paul King Jewett who misreads [Genesis 1](#).

Subordination is not the curse of the fall which is removed by the emancipatory work of Christ (according to Jewett's interpretation of [Galatians 3:28](#)). Rather, the fall occurred via insubordination (cf. [Gen. 3:6, 17](#)). As E. J. Young observes:

In the divinely imposed arrangement the woman was to occupy a certain position of subordination ... In the temptation and fall, however, she abandoned this subordinate role

²³ Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 49.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142ff.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

and sought to assume a position of leadership. Thus she raised herself above the man, emancipating herself from him, and in addition she led him into sin.²⁷

Furthermore, the curse is not the imposition of order, but the effect of the fall on already established order, just as the curse on man is not the imposition of work, but the effect of the fall on already established work. The desire of the woman for her husband and his rule over her in [Genesis 3:16](#) must be understood in light of a parallel construction in [Genesis 4:7](#), where sin is said to desire Cain but which he must rule. Thus the desire of Eve/sin is seen to be a desire to master Adam/Cain.²⁸ The female, rather than imaging God by following the order in which she was created, would seek to rule her husband and his rule (also affected by sin) would thus be a burden. Instead of a plurality of persons in ordered harmony, there is a plurality of persons in disorder and disharmony, the latter already evidenced in the man blaming his wife for his own sin ([Gen. 3:12](#)). [Galatians 3:28](#) speaks of the salvation of man(kind), but does not address the ordered harmony between male and female as the image of God. A salvation which restores man(kind) in the image of God is not from disorder to no order but from disorder to order, or from disharmony to harmony.

On this basis Paul, rather than abusing [Genesis 2](#) out of context from [Genesis 1](#), shows a keen insight into both creation narratives when he discusses role relations in [1 Corinthians 11](#). Women can and should be in submission to men in the church (vss. [8–9](#)—a direct reference to [Genesis 2](#)) even though they are equal as persons (vss. [11–12](#)), because the man is head of the woman just as in the Triune Godhead the Father is head of the Son (vs. [3](#)). In relating the *order* of the relationship of male-and-female to the order of the Godhead, Paul seems quite likely to be making a veiled reference to [Genesis 1:27](#), where man(kind) is God's image as male and female. Paul seems to substantiate such an allusion by his reference to 'image' in verse [7](#) with the curious phrase '[man] is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man.' No one wishes to argue that women are not in the image of God, so Paul cannot mean that only the man is in God's image. Rather, the context seems to indicate that Paul, in calling attention to the image, desires to stress its relational quality. From verse [3](#) we see that 'God' is used in the sense of 'Father' rather than 'Trinity'. Thus Paul stresses the fact that within the relational aspect of the image, it is the man that mirrors or 'images' the Father, and not the woman; though unstated, the clear implication is that she images or mirrors Christ. With this analysis Calvin is very much in agreement.

Both sexes were created in the image of God, and Paul exhorts women no less than men to be formed anew, according to that image. The *image*, however, of which he is now speaking relates to the order of marriage, and hence it belongs to the present life, and is not connected with conscience. [p. 226](#) The simple solution is this—that he does not treat here of innocence and holiness, which are equally becoming in men and women, but of the distinction, which God has conferred upon the man, so as to have superiority over the woman. In this superior order of dignity the glory of God is seen ...²⁹

This superiority is not with reference to worth or value, but of order and function. The ordered relationship between men and women argued for in verses [3](#) and [8–10](#) has its

²⁷ E. J. Young, *Genesis 3* (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), p. 126.

²⁸ Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), pp. 68–69.

²⁹ John Calvin, *Commentary on I and II Corinthians*, 2 Vols., reprint in 1 vol. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 1:357.

foundation in the *imago dei* (vs. 7). Bromiley capably shows how this passage uses the image to set forth the proper relationship between men and women.

The true relationship between man and woman is established on the basis of the *imago dei* in 1 Cor. 11:7 ... perhaps the true point of the introduction of the image here is that the relation between man and woman should reflect the relation between Father and Son within the godhead. Insofar as this relationship is demanded by the very structure of human life, the image is inescapably present. Insofar as it is perverted in practice, the inter-trinitarian relationship is no longer perceived. The true course is to remodel the practice on the divine original, so that this will be reflected not only in structure but in practice, too.³⁰

This is the very point which Jewett seems to miss completely. In speaking of man in the image of God as 'Man as male and female' or 'Man-in-fellowship', he ignores the nature of the fellowship of the three persons within the one Godhead of which the Man-in-fellowship is to be an image. The *economic* subordination of the Son to the Father in the Trinity does not negate their *essential* equality. The Father and Son are equally God, but the Son submits to his head, the Father. Paul very clearly understands this and relates it to the image in male and female (again, cf. [1 Cor. 11:3](#)). If only Jewett would recognize this, he would not have to posit an inconsistency within Paul. Further, it is this understanding which helps us to understand Paul's appeal to the angels as a ground for order in [1 Cor. 11:10](#). As C. K. Barrett indicates:

The angels are the guardians of the created order ... As such they would be particularly offended by the variation from the principle set out in verse 3.³¹

The angels who at creation were witnesses to the image of God in man p. 227 as male and female, should also now, especially in the church as it worshipped, be able to look upon this new creation redeemed by Christ and see the image of God. But this requires the plurality of male and female within the church to be in an ordered harmony.

In a similar way this understanding of man-as-male-and-female as the image of God clarifies and confirms Paul's appeal to the creation order as the ground for woman *not* to teach or to have authority over men in the church ([1 Timothy 2:11–15](#)). The redeemed community should be ordered just as the unfallen community, as the image of God, was ordered. Paul does not ignore [Genesis 1](#) but rather confirms its implicit teaching which is then made explicit in [Genesis 2](#).

Thus the recognition of the image of God as man(kind)-as-male-and-female does not overthrow the traditional role distinctions within the church, but (contra Jewett) confirms them. As was seen earlier, this view of the *imago dei* does in fact have a Scriptural basis, finding its analogy in the Godhead itself. The Christian God is a Triune God, the fellowship of three persons within the one Godhead. The relationship (*relationis*) of these three persons is as much a part of their Godness as their being (*ousia*), for our God is not a one-person Unitarian God. Rather, he is eternally the Triune three-persons-in-one-divine-essence God. That both being and relationship, a plurality of persons in an ordered harmony, are reflected in his created image is not surprising but rather to be expected. Man is created in the divine image, male and female, a plurality of persons in ordered harmony, an order which does not deny equality, but an order which must be maintained in the church and specifically in the ministry and offices of the church.

³⁰ Bromiley, 'Image of God', *ISBE*, II:804.

³¹ C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 254. cf. M. D. Hooker, 'Authority on Her Head', *New Testament Studies* 10 (April 1964), 410–416.

Leroy S. Capper, under care of the Missouri Presbytery (Presbyterian Church of America), is a 1985 graduate *summa cum laude* of Covenant Theological Seminary. p. 228

Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation

Vatican, Rome

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This is the second half of the Instruction (the first half was published in the last issue of ERT) which was adopted at an ordinary meeting of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and was approved at an audience granted to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger by his Holiness Pope John Paul II on 6th August, 1984.

This Instruction is one of the clearest and the most incisive evaluations of liberation theologies. Evangelicals will no doubt profit from several of the scriptural truths outlined in this document. We agree with the analysis that the aspiration and 'the positive will' for liberation is the result of Christian gospel. We also endorse the emphasis of liberation from sin as the primary and the basic liberation. But there are also some aspects which we cannot accept such as the voice of the Magisterium (the Church's authority over the Scriptures and the tradition). A further clarification is needed. The document uses the term 'evangelical' to mean 'Christian', 'spiritual', or 'gospel' rather than a reference to the theological stance of the historic movement for the defence and proclamation of biblical faith and authority.

The document also acknowledges certain significant limitations. It does not address itself to all the liberation theologies but rather only to those who have been inspired by the Marxist analysis and to those who have atheistic tendencies built into their framework. Some liberation theologies are more strongly grounded in biblical principles than others.

ERT will be publishing two important documents in the next issues: one will give an Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism—the result of more than two years' study by the Theological Commission's Task Force dealing with the issue and the other is the Singapore Statement, from the Theological Commission's consultation in Singapore in June 1986. Both are very relevant for the theme under discussion.

(Editors)

IX THE THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION OF THIS CORE

1. The positions here in question are often brought out explicitly in certain of the writings of 'theologians of liberation'. In others, they follow logically from their premises. In addition, they are presupposed in certain liturgical practices, as for example a 'Eucharist' transformed into a celebration of the people in struggle, even though the persons p. 229 who participate in these practices may not be fully conscious of it. We are facing, therefore, a real system, even if some hesitate to follow the logic to its conclusion. As such, this system is a perversion of the Christian message as God entrusted it to His Church.

This message in its entirety finds itself then called into question by the 'theologies of liberation'.

2. It is not the *fact* of social stratification with all its inequity and injustice, but the *theory* of class struggle as the fundamental law of history which has been accepted by these 'theologies of liberation' as a principle. The conclusion is drawn that the class struggle thus understood divides the Church herself, and that in light of this struggle even ecclesial realities must be judged.

The claim is even made that it would be maintaining an illusion with bad faith to propose that love in its universality can conquer what is the primary structural law of capitalism.

3. According to this conception, the class struggle is the driving force of history. History thus becomes a central notion. It will be affirmed that God Himself makes history. It will be added that there is only one history, one in which the distinction between the history of salvation and profane history is no longer necessary. To maintain the distinction would be to fall into 'dualism'. Affirmations such as these reflect historicist immanentism. Thus there is a tendency to identify the kingdom of God and its growth with the human liberation movement, and to make history itself the subject of its own development, as a process of the self-redemption of man by means of the class struggle.

This identification is in opposition to the faith of the Church as it has been reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Church.²³

4. Along these lines, some go so far as to identify God Himself with history and to define faith as 'fidelity to history', which means adhering to a political policy which is suited to the growth of humanity, conceived of as a purely temporal messianism.

5. As a consequence, faith, hope and charity are given a new content: they become 'fidelity to history', 'confidence in the future', and 'option for the poor'. This is tantamount to saying they have been emptied of their theological reality.

6. A radical politicization of faith's affirmations and of the theological judgments follows inevitably from this new conception. The question no longer has to do with simply drawing attention to the consequences and political implications of the truths of faith, which p. 230 are respected beforehand for their transcendent value. In this new system, every affirmation of faith or of theology is subordinated to a political criterion, which in turn depends on the class struggle, the driving force of history.

7. As a result, participation in the class struggle is presented as a requirement of charity itself. The desire to love everyone here and now, despite his class, and to go out to meet him with the non-violent means of dialogue and persuasion, is denounced as counterproductive and opposed to love.

If one holds that a person should not be the object of hate, it is claimed nevertheless that, if he belongs to the objective class of the rich, he is *primarily* a class enemy to be fought. Thus the universality of love of neighbour and brotherhood become an eschatological principle, which will only have meaning for the 'new man' who arises out of the victorious revolution.

8. As far as the Church is concerned, this system would see her *only* as a reality interior to history, herself subject to those laws which are supposed to govern the development of history in its immanence. The Church, the gift of God and mystery of faith, is emptied of any specific reality by this reductionism. At the same time, it is disputed that the participation of Christians who belong to opposing classes at the same Eucharistic Table still makes any sense.

²³ Cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 9-17.

9. In its positive meaning the *Church of the poor* signifies the preference given to the poor, without exclusion, whatever the form of their poverty, because they are preferred by God. The expression also refers to the Church of our time, as communion and institution and on the part of her members, becoming more fully conscious of the requirement of evangelical poverty.

10. But the 'theologies of liberation', which reserve credit for restoring to a place of honour the great texts of the prophets and of the Gospel in defence of the poor, go on to a disastrous confusion between the *poor* of the Scripture and the *proletariat* of Marx. In this way they pervert the Christian meaning of the poor, and they transform the fight for the rights of the poor into a class fight within the ideological perspective of the class struggle. For them, the *Church of the poor* signifies the Church of the class which has become aware of the requirements of the revolutionary struggle as a step toward liberation and which celebrates this liberation in its liturgy.

11. A further remark regarding the expression, *Church of the People*, will not be out of place here. From the pastoral point of view, this expression might mean the favoured recipients of evangelization to whom, because of their condition, the Church extends her pastoral [p. 231](#) love first of all. One might also refer to the Church as the people of God, that is, people of the New Covenant established in Christ.²⁴

12. But the 'theologies of liberation' of which we are speaking, mean by *Church of the People* a Church of the class, a Church of the oppressed people whom it is necessary to 'conscientize' in the light of the organized struggle for freedom. For some, the people, thus understood, even become the object of faith.

13. Building on such a conception of the Church of the People, a critique of the very structures of the Church is developed. It is not simply the case of fraternal correction of pastors of the Church whose behaviour does not reflect the evangelical spirit of service and is linked to old-fashioned signs of authority which scandalize the poor. It has to do with a challenge to the *sacramental and hierarchical structure* of the Church, which was willed by the Lord Himself. There is a denunciation of members of the hierarchy and the magisterium as objective representatives of the ruling class which has to be opposed. Theologically, this position means that ministers take their origin from the people who therefore designate ministers of their own choice in accord with the needs of their historic revolutionary mission.

X A NEW HERMENEUTIC

1. The partisan conception of truth, which can be seen in the revolutionary *praxis* of the class, corroborates this position. Theologians who do not share the theses of the 'theology of liberation', the hierarchy, and especially the Roman Magisterium are thus discredited *in advance* as belonging to the class of the oppressors. Their theology is a theology of class. Arguments and teachings thus do not have to be examined in themselves since they are only reflections of class interests. Thus, the instruction of others is decreed to be, in principle, false.

2. Here is where the global and all-embracing character of the theology of liberation appears. As a result, it must be criticized not just on the basis of this or that affirmation, but on the basis of its classist viewpoint, which it has adopted *a priori*, and which has come to function in it as a determining principle.

3. Because of this classist presupposition, it becomes very difficult, not to say impossible, to engage in a real dialogue with some theologians of liberation' in such a way

²⁴ Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 39.

that the other participant is listened to, and his arguments are discussed with objectivity and attention. For these theologians start out with the idea, more or less [p. 232](#) consciously, that the viewpoint of the oppressed and revolutionary class, which is their own, is the single true point of view. Theological criteria for truth are thus relativized and subordinated to the imperatives of the class struggle. In this perspective, *orthodoxy* or the right rule of faith, is substituted by the notion of *orthopraxy* as the criterion of the truth. In this connection it is important not to confuse practical orientation, which is proper to traditional theology in the same way that speculative orientation is, with the recognized and privileged priority given to a certain type of *praxis*. For them, this *praxis* is the revolutionary *praxis* which thus becomes the supreme criterion for theological truth. A healthy theological method no doubt will always take the *praxis* of the Church into account and will find there one of its foundations, but that is because that *praxis* comes from the faith and is a lived expression of it.

4. For the 'theologies of liberation', however, the social doctrine of the Church is rejected with disdain. It is said that it comes from the illusion of a possible compromise, typical of the middle class which has no historic destiny.

5. The new *hermeneutic* inherent in the 'theologies of liberation' leads to an essentially *political* re-reading of the Scriptures. Thus, a major importance is given to the *Exodus* event inasmuch as it is a liberation from political servitude. Likewise, a political reading of the *Magnificat* is proposed. The mistake here is not in bringing attention to a political dimension of the readings of Scripture, but in making of this one dimension the principal or exclusive component. This leads to a reductionist reading of the Bible.

6. Likewise, one places oneself within the perspective of a temporal messianism, which is one of the most radical of the expressions of secularization of the Kingdom of God and of its absorption into the immanence of human history.

7. In giving such priority to the political dimension, one is led to deny the *radical newness* of the New Testament and above all to misunderstand the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and thus the specific character of the salvation he gave us, that is above all liberation from sin, which is the source of all evils.

8. Moreover in setting aside the authoritative interpretation of the Church, denounced as classist, one is at the same time departing from tradition. In that way, one is robbed of an essential theological criterion of interpretation and, in the vacuum thus created, one welcomes the most radical theses of rationalist exegesis. Without a critical eye, one returns to the opposition of the 'Jesus of history' versus the 'Jesus of faith'. [p. 233](#)

9. Of course the creeds of the faith are literally preserved, especially the Chalcedonian creed, but a new meaning is given to them which is a negation of the faith of the Church. On one hand, the Christological doctrine of Tradition is rejected in the name of class; on the other hand, one claims to meet again the 'Jesus of history' coming from the revolutionary experience of the struggle of the poor for their liberation.

10. One claims to be reliving an experience similar to that of Jesus. The experience of the poor struggling for their liberation, which was Jesus' experience, would thus reveal, and it alone, the knowledge of the true God and of the Kingdom.

11. Faith in the Incarnate Word, dead and risen for all men, and whom 'God made Lord and Christ'²⁵ is denied. In its place is substituted a figure of Jesus who is a kind of symbol who sums up in Himself the requirements of the struggle of the oppressed.

12. An exclusively political interpretation is thus given to the death of Christ. In this way, its value for salvation and the whole economy of redemption is denied.

13. This new interpretation thus touches the whole of the Christian mystery.

²⁵ Cf. *Acts* [2, 36](#).

14. In a general way, this brings about what can be called an inversion of symbols. Thus, instead of seeing, with St. Paul, a figure of Baptism in the Exodus,²⁶ some end up making of it a symbol of the political liberation of the people.

15. When the same hermeneutical criterion is applied to the life and to the hierarchical constitution of the Church, the relationship between the hierarchy and the 'base' becomes the relationship of obedient domination to the law of the struggle of the classes. Sacramentality, which is at the root of the ecclesial ministries and which makes of the Church a spiritual reality which cannot be reduced to a purely sociological analysis, is quite simply ignored.

16. This inversion of symbols is likewise verified in the area of the *sacraments*. The Eucharist is no longer to be understood as the real sacramental presence of the reconciling sacrifice, and as the gift of the Body and Blood of Christ. It becomes a celebration of the people in their struggle. As a consequence, the unity of the Church is radically denied. Unity, reconciliation and communion in love are no longer seen as a gift we receive from Christ.²⁷ It is the historical class of the [p. 234](#) poor who by means of their struggle will build unity. For them, the struggle of the classes is the way to unity. The Eucharist thus becomes the Eucharist of the class. At the same time, they deny the triumphant force of the love of God which has been given to us.

XI ORIENTATIONS

1. The warning against the serious deviations of some 'theologies of liberation' must not be taken as some kind of approval, even indirect, of those who keep the poor in misery, who profit from that misery, who notice it while doing nothing about it, or who remain indifferent to it. The Church, guided by the Gospel of mercy and by the love for mankind, hears the cry for justice²⁸ and intends to respond to it with all her might.

2. Thus a great call goes out to all the Church: with boldness and courage, with farsightedness and prudence, with zeal and strength of spirit, with a love for the poor which demands sacrifice; pastors will consider the response to this call a matter of the highest priority, as many already do.

3. All priests, religious and laypeople who hear this call for justice and who want to work for evangelization and the advancement of mankind, will do so in communion with their bishop and with the Church, each in accord with his or her own specific ecclesial vocation.

4. Aware of the ecclesial character of their vocation, theologians will collaborate loyally and with a spirit of dialogue with the Magisterium of the Church. They will be able to recognize in the Magisterium a gift of Christ to His Church²⁹ and will welcome its word and its directives with filial respect.

5. It is only when one begins with the task of evangelization understood in its entirety that the authentic requirements of human progress and liberation are appreciated. This

²⁶ Cf. *1 Co.* [10, 1-2](#).

²⁷ Cf. *Eph.* [2, 11-22](#).

²⁸ Cf. *Doc. de Puebla*, I, II, 3. 3.

²⁹ Cf. [Lk. 10, 16](#).

liberation has as its indispensable pillars: *the truth about Jesus the Saviour, the truth about the Church, and the truth about man and his dignity.*³⁰

It is in light of the Beatitudes, and especially the Beatitude of the poor of heart, that the Church, which wants to be the Church of the poor throughout the world, intends to come to the aid of the noble struggle for truth and justice. She addresses each person, and for that p. 235 reason, every person. She is the 'universal Church. The Church of the Incarnation. She is not the Church of one class or another. And she speaks in the name of truth itself. This truth is realistic'. It leads to a recognition 'of every human reality, every injustice, every tension and every struggle'³¹

6. An effective defence of justice needs to be based on the truth of mankind, created in the image of God and called to the grace of divine sonship. The recognition of the true relationship of human beings to God constitutes the foundation of justice to the extent that it rules the relationships between people. That is why the fight for the rights of man, which the Church does not cease to reaffirm, constitutes the authentic fight for justice.

7. The truth of mankind requires that this battle be fought in ways consistent with human dignity. That is why the systematic and deliberate recourse to blind violence, no matter from which side it comes, must be condemned.³² To put one's trust in violent means in the hope of restoring more justice is to become the victim of a fatal illusion: violence begets violence and degrades man. It mocks the dignity of man in the person of the victims and it debases that same dignity among those who practise it.

8. The acute need for radical reforms of the structures which conceal poverty and which are themselves forms of violence, Should not let us lose sight of the fact that the source of injustice is in the hearts of men. Therefore it is only by making an appeal to the *moral potential* of the person and to the constant need for interior conversion, that social change will be brought about which will truly be in the service of man.³³ For it will only be in the measure that they collaborate freely in these necessary changes through their own initiative and in solidarity, that people, awakened to a sense of their responsibility, will grow in humanity.

The inversion of morality and structures is steeped in a materialist anthropology which is incompatible with the dignity of mankind.

9. It is therefore an equally fatal illusion to believe that these new structures will of themselves give birth to a 'new man' in the sense of the truth of man. The Christian cannot forget that it is only the Holy Spirit who has been given to us Who is the source of every true renewal and that God is the Lord of History. p. 236

10. By the same token, the overthrow by means of revolutionary violence of structures which generate violence is not *ipso facto* the beginning of a just regime. A major fact of our time ought to evoke the reflection of all those who would sincerely work for the true liberation of their brothers: millions of our own contemporaries legitimately yearn to recover those basic freedoms of which they were deprived by totalitarian and atheistic regimes which came to power by violent and revolutionary means, precisely in the name of the liberation of the people. This shame of our time cannot be ignored: while claiming to bring them freedom, these regimes keep whole nations in conditions of servitude which

³⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Address at the Opening of the Conference at Puebla, AAS 71* (1979) pp. 188–196; *Doc. de Puebla II P*, c. 1.

³¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Favela 'Vidigd' at Rio de Janeiro, 2 July 1980, AAS 72* (1980) pp. 852–858.

³² *Doc. de Puebla, II, c. II, 5. 4.*

³³ Cf. *Doc. de Puebla, IV, c. 3. 3. 1.*

are unworthy of mankind. Those who, perhaps inadvertently, make themselves accomplices of similar enslavements betray the very poor they mean to help.

11. The class struggle as a road toward a classless society is a myth which slows reform and aggravates poverty and injustice. Those who allow themselves to be caught up in fascination with this myth should reflect on the bitter examples history has to offer about where it leads. They would then understand that we are not talking here about abandoning an effective means of struggle on behalf of the poor for an ideal which has no practical effects. On the contrary, we are talking about freeing oneself from a delusion in order to base oneself squarely on the Gospel and its power of realization.

12. One of the conditions for necessary theological correction is giving proper value to the *social teaching of the Church*. This teaching is by no means closed. It is, on the contrary, open to all the new questions which are so numerous today. In this perspective, the contribution of theologians and other thinkers in all parts of the world to the reflection of the Church is indispensable today.

13. Likewise the experience of those who work directly for evangelization and for the advancement of the poor and the oppressed is necessary for the doctrinal and pastoral reflection of the Church. In this sense, it is necessary to affirm that one becomes more aware of certain aspects of truth by starting with *praxis*, if by that one means pastoral *praxis* and social work which keeps its evangelical inspiration.

14. The teaching of the Church on social issues indicates the main lines of ethical orientation. But in order that it be able to guide action directly, the Church needs competent people from a scientific and technological viewpoint, as well as in the human and political sciences. Pastors should be attentive to the formation of persons of such capability who live the Gospel deeply. Laypersons, whose proper mission is to build society, are involved here to the highest degree.

15. The theses of the 'theologies of liberation' are widely popularized [p. 237](#) under a simplified form, in formation sessions or in what are called 'base groups' which lack the necessary catechetical and theological preparation as well as the capacity for discernment. Thus these theses are accepted by generous men and women without any critical judgment being made.

16. That is why pastors must look after the quality and the content of catechesis and formation which should always present the *whole message of salvation* and the imperatives of true liberation within the framework of this whole message.

17. In this full presentation of Christianity, it is proper to emphasize those essential aspects which the 'theologies of liberation' especially tend to misunderstand or to eliminate, namely: the transcendence and gratuity of liberation in Jesus Christ, true God and true man; the sovereignty of grace; and the true nature of the means of salvation, especially of the Church and the sacraments. One should also keep in mind the true meaning of ethics in which the distinction between good and evil is not relativized, the real meaning of sin, the necessity for conversion, and the universality of the law of fraternal love.

One needs to be on guard against the politicization of existence which, misunderstanding the entire meaning of the Kingdom of God and the transcendence of the person, begins to sacralize politics and betray the religion of the people in favour of the projects of the revolution.

18. The defenders of orthodoxy are sometimes accused of passivity, indulgence or culpable complicity regarding the intolerable situations of justice and the political regimes which prolong them. Spiritual conversion the intensity of the love of God and neighbour, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty, are required of everyone, and especially of pastors and those in positions of responsibility.

The concern for the purity of the faith demands giving the answer of effective witness in the service of one's neighbour, the poor and the oppressed in particular, in an integral theological fashion. By the witness of their dynamic and constructive power to love, Christians will thus lay the foundations of this 'civilization of love' of which the Conference of Puebla spoke, following Paul VI.³⁴ Moreover there are already many priests, religious and laypeople who are consecrated in a truly evangelical way for the creation of a just society.

CONCLUSION

The words of Paul VI in his *Profession of Faith*, express with full **p. 238** clarity the faith of the Church, from which one cannot deviate without provoking, besides spiritual disaster, new miseries and new types of slavery.

'We profess our faith that the Kingdom of God, begun here below in the Church of Christ, is not of this world, whose form is passing away, and that its own growth cannot be confused with the progress of civilization, of science or of human technology, but that it consists in knowing ever more deeply the unfathomable riches of Christ, to hope ever more strongly in things eternal, to respond ever more ardently to the love of God, to spread ever more widely grace and holiness among men. But it is this very same love which makes the Church constantly concerned for the true temporal good of mankind as well. Never ceasing to recall to her children that they have no lasting dwelling here on earth, she urges them also to contribute, each according to this own vocation and means, to the welfare of their earthly city, to promote justice, peace and brotherhood among men, to lavish their assistance on their brothers, especially on the poor and the most dispirited. The intense concern of the Church, the bride of Christ, for the needs of mankind, their joys and their hopes, their pains and their struggles, is nothing other than the great desire to be present to them in order to enlighten them with the light of Christ, and join them all to Him, their only Saviour. It can never mean that the Church is conforming to the things of this world, nor that she is lessening the earnestness with which she awaits her Lord and the eternal Kingdom.'³⁵ **p. 239**

The Humanity of God and of Man: An Introduction to Eberhard Jüngel

John Webster

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Eberhard Jüngel is Professor of Systematic Theology and the Philosophy of Religion in the University of Tübingen, and one of the most prominent of contemporary Protestant

³⁴ Cf. *Doc. de Puebla*, IV, II, 2.3.

³⁵ Paul VI, *Profession of Faith of the People of God*, 30 June 1968, AAS 60 (1968) pp. 443–444.

systematic theologians in Germany. A pupil of both Karl Barth and the New Testament theologian Ernst Fuchs, his work so far has straddled several different theological fields. In a publishing career of just over two decades, he has produced major studies in New Testament exegesis, classical philosophy, the work of Luther and Barth, the philosophy of religion and the theory of language, as well as substantial dogmatic studies and a good number of more popular works. His prowess as preacher and lecturer has won him acclaim from audiences wider than those of professional theologians. In the English-speaking world, however, his work remains relatively little known and is only just beginning to be translated. This is partly because his style and method of approach are often quite sharply divergent from those more favoured in English-language theology at present; partly it is because his writing presupposes familiarity with debates and specialist literatures little attended to beyond Germany; and partly because Jüngel's own engagement with those schools of German theology which have been easily assimilated by English readers—such as the theology of liberation—has been tangential and critical. His work, indeed, represents a massive attempt to shift the theological agenda back to substantive issues in dogmatics, and away from what he feels to be an unfruitful preoccupation with practical or political relevance. To this end, his work is often severely professional, making heavy demands of the reader who would master long passages of complex and nuanced argument.

Jüngel's work so far has been particularly broad-ranging in its elected themes. But if a larger trend is to be discerned throughout his theology, it is a concern to develop an account of the relationship between God and the world in which the divine and the human are complementary. God and man form two mutually exclusive realities. This theme, which Jüngel usually labels that of 'distinguishing between God and man', could be said to form the pivot of the whole of his theological programme. As we review his doctrines of God and man, we shall see that he is above all else anxious to avoid a reduction of the two-foldness of God and man to a single, self-consistent stratum. He [p. 240](#) urges the rejection of any doctrine in which God is the only significant reality and which reduces man to a mere function of the divine, not possessed of freedom and authenticity. And similarly, he resists any anthropocentrism in which the divine is a mere function or projection of the human world.

1. CHRISTOLOGY

Jüngel is widely regarded as one of the most astute living interpreters of Barth. His very profound engagement with Barth's theology, from his early study *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (Tübingen, 1964) to his latest collection of *Barth-Studien* (Gütersloh, 1982), has given his work a resolute Christocentrism, in which the source and norm of all theological discourse are to be found in God's self-disclosure in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jüngel's work is thus pervaded by the conviction that Christological assertions lie at the heart of authentically Christian doctrines of God and Man. 'Out of this Christological event theological thinking has to state what may properly be called God and man' (*Gott als Geheimnis der Welt* (Tübingen, 1977) 315). Jüngel, in other words, does not envisage Christology as simply one doctrine alongside others; rather, it provides the basis upon which all other doctrines are built, and it is normative and regulative of the whole corpus of Christian teaching. It has this function because in Jüngel's theology, the doctrine of the person of Christ has come to occupy the place of the doctrine of revelation. As another eminent Barth scholar has written, 'there is a structural and essentially Christological pattern running throughout the whole body of our theological knowledge, which can be studied and used as a norm or criterion for helping to shape the true form of each doctrine, for testing and proving the different doctrines to see whether they fit into the essential structure of the whole' (T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London, 1965), 148f.).

In view of this Christological colouring of the whole of Jüngel's theology, it may seem surprising that he has not so far published any detailed exploration of familiar areas in the doctrines of the person of Christ, and particularly of patristic and credal interpretations of the Christological dogma. His emphasis has fallen more on the issues in theological method just referred to, and on the hermeneutical questions raised by the Christology of the New Testament. This latter theme provided one of the main thrusts of his doctoral thesis *Paulus und Jesus* (Tübingen, 1962), written at the time of intense interest in questions concerning our knowledge of the history of Jesus and the p. 241 significance of such knowledge for dogmatic Christology. More recently, Jüngel's Christology has concentrated on the death of Christ as the focal event for our understanding both of his person and of the nature of God and man. 'Christian faith in the crucified Jesus Christ leads to the heart of Christian belief. Christian theology is thus essentially *theologia crucifixi*' (*Entsprechungen* (Munich, 1980), 278).

Before turning to examine the implications of this staurocentric Christology for the doctrines of God and man, it is perhaps worth noting how the position which Jüngel adopts depends on a particular interpretation of the resurrection of Christ. He insists that the resurrection is not to be seen as a continuation of the career of Jesus, as a subsequent stage in his story. Rather, it is the interpretation of the meaning of the event of Calvary, the declaration that God has identified himself with the crucified. 'On the basis of faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the death of Jesus comes to have formal meaning as an integral of his earthly existence' (*ibid.*, 282). In other words, resurrection faith enables us to see Jesus' history as a unity with shape and form contours, no longer ambivalent in meaning. There is certainly here a confusion between 'the resurrection' and 'faith in the resurrection'. And there is, moreover, a failure to grapple with the way in which the New Testament is uneasy with any underplaying of either Good Friday or Easter Day. Crucifixion and Resurrection are not related as 'event and interpretation' or as 'reversal of fortunes followed by triumph'; rather, together they form one complex event. 'The centre of Apostolic Christianity is Crucifixion-Resurrection; not Crucifixion alone, nor Resurrection alone, nor even the Crucifixion as the prelude and the Resurrection as the finale, but the blending of the two in a way that is as real to the gospel as it is defiant to the world' (A.M. Ramsey, *The Resurrection of Christ* (London, 1961) 20).

But how does the crucified Jesus form the locus of truth about God and man?

2. THE HUMANITY OF GOD

Jüngel's work is deeply scored by the conviction that the character of God is to be discovered by attention to the character of Jesus. For if in the man Jesus the essence of God is played out before the world, then his humanity is not an obscuring of the being of God, the hiding of divine glory in human weakness and suffering. On the contrary, his humanity is the manifestation of God. Accordingly it is both appropriate and necessary for Christian theology to talk of the 'humanity of God': God in the flesh is the one who chooses to be p. 242 himself by becoming man. As Barth wrote, 'If He (Jesus) is the Word of Truth, then the truth of God is exactly this and nothing else' (*The Humanity of God* (London, 1961) 49).

Jüngel takes Barth's work a good deal further by his heavy emphasis on the cross. Not simply the man Jesus but in particular 'the crucified is as it were the material definition of what is meant by the word "God" ' (*Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 15). Indeed, so bound up with the cross is the definition of God that an inevitable concomitant of God's identification of himself with the crucified is language about the 'death of God'. 'Faith in

the identity of the Son of God with the Crucified necessitates the confession that in and with the man Jesus God himself has suffered and died' (*Entsprechungen*, 283).

This somewhat provocative language about the death of God needs careful interpretation if it is not to be misunderstood. Jüngel does not use it in the way in which it was used by the ephemeral 'death of God' theologians of the 1960s, namely as a startling way to describe the cessation of belief in God as a public option in much of western society. Rather, he uses such language to try and state as sharply as possible how God defines himself by becoming man. Above all, his concern is to state how the death of God on the cross of Christ can be ontologically positive, an affirmation rather than a denial of the being of God. To speak of God's death is not to speak of the collapse of God into nothingness, or of his ceasing to be—such talk of God would be absurd. Rather, to speak of God's death is to specify the character of God's being, to ask how God is able to be himself in such a way. In this concern to map out some of the ontological implications of talk of the death of God, Jüngel advances significantly beyond some of the more popular and rhetorical theopaschite theologies current in some circles. Unlike, for example, Jürgen Moltmann in *The Crucified God* (ET, London, 1974), Jüngel refuses to dodge the questions of precisely how it can be that 'God's self-surrender is not his self-abandonment' (*Entsprechungen*, 289). And he offers two main answers to the problem.

The first is what can be best labelled the notion of God's ability. What God does, he can do. Decisions about what is and what is not appropriate for God, in other words, can only be made on the basis of how God has actually shown himself to act, and not on the basis of general or natural notions of what is appropriate to divinity. To the acts of God there corresponds the ability of God to do those things which he has done. In the case of our talk of God's death, God shows by dying on the cross of Christ that he has the ability to give himself freely to death. His aseity, the freedom of his self-determination, is actual in [p. 243](#) his self-renunciation at Calvary. And so that self-renunciation in no way spells the end of God. Rather, it is the full expression of God's determination to be himself in this way, in giving himself up to death, God is most characteristically himself. His suffering of death is the freely-chosen mode of his life and not its negation, and in death he retains his freedom as the origin and end of his own ways.

That this can be so is set out in the second answer, which is the trinitarian character of God. One of the functions of the doctrine of the trinity in Jüngel's theology is to show that in death God is fully congruent with himself. One of the results of a strong emphasis on the cross is an apparent threat to the coherence of the being of God: Father and Son seem to be split apart by the events of Calvary. But because God is triune he remains in that opposition nevertheless related to himself. At the cross, 'God does not contradict himself. God corresponds to himself. And so we need the doctrine of the Trinity' (*Gott Als Geheimnis der Welt*, 474).

Thus for Jüngel talk of the humanity of God inevitably drifts into talk of the Trinity. Far from furnishing a speculative reconstruction of the doctrine of God with little real grounding in the apostolic gospel, the doctrine of the Trinity is in fact the attempt consistently to think through how the mission of Jesus and the negativity of his death can be characteristic of the ways of God. And since God is such that he identifies himself in the man Jesus, then he is the one in whom alone humanity is properly safeguarded.

3. THE HUMANITY OF MAN

How does the humanity of God issue in the humanity of man?

Jüngel is deeply suspicious of what he regards as the tradition of metaphysical theism, in that its doctrine of God, built on speculative rather than on Christological foundations,

tends to exclude the incarnation and the death of Christ from the being of God. In this, the 'traditional' concept is too human: it objectifies or projects man's desire for mastery over his fellows, and in so doing it falls woefully short of the humanity of God. Because it will not allow God to be man, it does not allow God to be God. And, furthermore, it does not allow man to be man, for it constantly projects man's desires for divinity. And in so doing, it merely alienates man from himself.

Over against this, Jüngel suggests that the purpose of the incarnation is not so much man's deification—God became man that man might become God—as man's humanisation: God became man that man might become man. As he put it in a radio talk, 'The Christian faith is p. 244 that human view of God, in which man trusts himself to the fact that God became and remains man, in order that man can become human and ever more human. Put more briefly: the essence of the Christian faith is the proper distinction between God and man, namely between a human God and an ever more human man' (*Unterwegs zur Sache* (Munich, 1972) 299).

In his more detailed exploration of theological anthropology Jüngel makes a good deal of use of the doctrine of justification. That doctrine is more usually confined to a soteriological context. In Jüngel's hands, its use becomes much more extended, so that for him the doctrine of justification functions as a definition of man. It does this by its emphasis on the proper *passivity* of man as a creature of God. Man's sinfulness consists in the drive to self-realization through activity and to self-definition without relations. In such self-realization and self-definition, man understands himself first and foremost as agent, as the architect of his own humanity. He is, in the fullest sense, self-made. It is the insistence of the doctrine of justification that over and above his agency man is primarily a receiver or a listener, one whose being is granted in obedient hearing of the Word of God. In such passivity, man's disposition is such that his whole self is contingent upon the creative activity of God through whom his humanity is fashioned.

4. THE REALITY OF MAN

Behind this anthropology lies a profound appreciation of Barth's use of Christology as the key to the doctrine of man. For Jüngel as for Barth the real being of man lies not so much in what he makes of himself as in Jesus Christ, through whom humanity is constituted afresh. The foundation of human reality is the history of Jesus: he alone is authentically human, and to be human is to be made in his image, or, as Jüngel prefers to say, to 'express God'. Man is man insofar as he is an image or analogy of the humanity of God in Jesus the true man. 'Humanity consists in expressing God' (*Entsprechungen*, 298).

This kind of Christologically grounded theological anthropology introduces a set of problems into Jüngel's theology, problems which are especially acute in view of his desire to avoid making man into a mere function of the divine. These problems coalesce in the question of the status of those who are outside Christ. In what sense can those who refuse the divine determination of man in Christ be said to be properly human if humanity as such consists in expressing God? Jüngel clearly wishes to affirm that man outside Christ is still man. But in order to make that affirmation he has to propose that man seemingly p. 245 outside Christ is in fact at the most fundamental level of his being determined by Christ, the *truth* of his being is in Christ, although the *actually* of his self-realization may appear to contradict this.

Consequently, Jüngel has to argue that those acts in which man denies rather than expresses God are not properly definitive of his being. Man's rejection of God is ontologically and definitively inferior to God's affirmation of man in Christ. And so sin becomes not so much a positive historical force, or a human project in rebellion against

God, as a surpassed reality, essentially negative. 'Under the appearance of being, the sinner celebrates nothingness' (*Unterwegs zur Sache*, 218). Thus the definition of man out of the history of the true man Jesus entails the assertion of the ontological insignificance of man's manifest refusal to be determined by God.

It is at the level of his account of human sin that Jüngel experiences real difficulty in sustaining a theology which is equally affirmative of the realities of both God and man. Because man's sinful acts are not allowed to be substantially determinative of man's being, they remain at what Jüngel calls the *ontic* rather than the more fundamental *ontological* stratum of humanity. They are privative rather than positive; they do not make a man into what he is, because what he is is determination by Jesus. The result of this line of argument may well be to absorb man into Christ, allowing no possibility of man setting himself outside that determination and realizing his being in a way which is alien to that of expressing God. The absolute and undifferentiated inclusiveness of the definition of all men in Christ is unaffected by man's denial of that definition. In this way, a question-mark is set against the reality of human dignity and freedom, and Jüngel's desire to avoid a monism in which man is no longer substantial in his own right is compromised to the extent that the reality of his rebellion is not so much denied as negated.

Two consequences follow from this. The first concerns theological method. Jüngel's account of the reality of man is excessively abstract and a-historical. This is because conclusions about the nature and destiny of man are reached not by close inspection of the human scene but by deployment of the theological principle of the inclusivity of the being of Jesus Christ. One result of this is that counter-evidence to the theory—notably the sinful reality of man—is accorded insufficient weight. By starting from the general rather than from the particular instance, Jüngel's theological anthropology tends to favour an over-arching account of humanity without close exploration of the texture of the man condition.

A second consequence of this understanding of human sin is that [p. 246](#) Jüngel's theology lacks any real theology of the atonement. His answer to the question *Cur Deus Homo?*, 'Why Did God Become Man?' is that the incarnation furnishes a new *definition* of divinity and humanity. True knowledge of God and true knowledge of humanity are to be derived from the God-man, the crucified with whom God identified himself. There is, accordingly, little sense in Jüngel's theological scheme of the need for *reconciliation* between God and man. Because of this, the cross becomes primarily the locus of revelation: it dramatizes the character of God as the lowly, human God, but it is not seen as that act without which God and man remain estranged. Reconciliation takes place in the person rather than in the work of Christ.

Like a good deal of theological writing which has been deeply influenced especially by the later writing of Barth, Jüngel's massive Christocentrism is soteriologically inadequate. Yet equally it shares with Barth a remarkable confidence about the doctrinal substance of the Christian faith. If this confidence is not always shared by his Anglo-Saxon contemporaries, that may not simply be because they are more alert to the restraints imposed on theology by its Enlightenment heritage.

Dr. Webster is a lecturer in Theology, St. John's College, Durham, England. [p. 247](#)

Encounter with Jesus in Popular Islam

Bill Musk

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A young Egyptian wife and mother named Hanân suffered from a painful stomach illness. It was eventually diagnosed as cancer. Hanân was twenty-seven years of age and her wealthy husband encouraged her to look for medical assistance. None could be found which would deal with the disease that was gradually killing her. Finally, some members of Hanân's family encouraged her to pray to Jesus, the Christians' Jesus, for he is famous for his healing powers. So Hanân prayed to Jesus and was healed. As a result, Hanân started to talk with an orthodox Christian neighbour and to learn more about the Christian faith. After a year, the Orthodox Christian friend introduced Hanân to another (Protestant) Christian who explained the gospel in greater clarity to her. A few weeks later Hanân was baptized.

This encounter with Jesus of a provincial, Egyptian Muslim provokes an enquiry into the understanding which ordinary Muslims have of the Christians' Christ. How do Muslims see Jesus? Where in their cosmological map does he fit? Can a grasp of the view of Jesus in popular Islam help the Christian to communicate more understandingly and effectively with his Muslim neighbour?

Our starting-point, in seeking to answer such questions, will be with the ordinary Muslim himself. The primary aim is to reconstruct a picture of the world as he looks out upon it, to comprehend his cosmological map. The second step will be to examine the place of Jesus in that cosmology. The final task will be to suggest a rationale for patterns of encounter between Jesus Christ and the ordinary Muslim.

A COSMOLOGICAL MAP OF POPULAR ISLAM

In this exploration of popular Muslim belief and practice, the aim is to look behind the surface attitudes and actions to the assumptional models which provoke and justify those attitudes and actions. examples are given from an Egyptian context though they could be multiplied from around the Muslim world. A cosmology of popular Islam appears to cohere in terms of two major concepts, those of power and of being. Concepts of power abound in the Muslim consciousness and a major distinction may be made in terms of the location of the force concerned either in this world or in the world beyond. *Quadr* (fate) is an example of an other-worldly force that bears upon human life. Usually only appreciated in hindsight, the operation of this concept applies in everyday life usually at moments of extreme **P. 248** crisis. The death of a child in a road accident may be explained as the result of the operation of fate and charges of manslaughter against the driver may be dropped by the parents of the deceased child. More common concepts of force are found in the immediate, tangible universe. These may range from the effect of herbs or drugs, often employed at times of crisis, rites to keep away evil spirits or harm. to that of magic or sorcery. These latter forces are deliberately sought at the hands of recognized practitioners to effect changes in other human beings' lives. An example would be the use of love magic. Astrology and divination are seen as strong powers in ordinary Muslims' lives. The tendency for women to be especially involved as practitioners in the appropriating of these forces is common: a mother-in-law, a midwife, or a *shaykha*. Fortunetellers (masculine *‘arrâf*, feminine *‘arrâfa*) are common in villages, towns and

cities. The vaguely complementary concepts of *baraka*¹ and evil eye exemplify highly motivational aspects of popular Muslim cosmology as they impinge on everyday living. Returnees from the *hajj*² to Mecca are met off boat and airplane by relatives anxious to wipe their hands immediately over the pilgrims' faces and clothes in order to transfer to themselves the accumulated *baraka* of Islam's most holy places. The peculiar Egyptian *mushâhara* syndrome, a rather specific manifestation of the evil eye concept, leads to quite complex observance of taboos in ordinary Muslim homes. The largest operation of such taboo occurs in regard to the visiting by certain persons of a nursing mother and to the bringing of certain substances into the home of someone in a state of 'sacred vulnerability' (Kennedy, 1967:690ff.). Many other concepts of power operate strongly in society. These include omens, vows, curses blessings, the vast world of prophylaxis (amulets, charms, talismans etc.) and the highly motivational forces of dreams and visions. In everyday encounter with Muslims the recognition of such powers cannot but be noticed, whether it is in observing the protective use to the 'hand of Fâtima', or in sensing the concentration of hope at the *şandûq al-nudhûr* (box of vows) in a shrine, or in listening to an explanation of events in terms of 'so-and-so visited Badî'a in her dreams ...' The concepts of force which inform a cosmology of the ordinary Muslim may be empirical (such as drugs or other natural forces) but the majority are transempirical, with visions and dreams forming a bridge between the two realms. Certainly all such powers, except perhaps that of fate, are accessible to ordinary Muslims either immediately or via professional practitioners. P. 249

The cosmology of popular Muslim religion is equally generated by concepts of being or personal life. Myths of origin and *hadîth*³ place the creation of mankind in the context of a larger world of supernatural beings. The transempirical world especially is filled with many kinds of being. God himself of course heads the category of being in popular Muslim religion. Archangels, angels and devils are also conceived of as existing and having effect in the lives of mortals. Angels touch Egyptian bedouin life, for example, in the matter of control of the earth: *kull shibr rain al-ard mar'î* (every span of the ground is under custody). Such angels are understood as being intensely jealous of the ground that belongs to them. So the bedouin of Sinai carefully obtain leave from the angels before pitching a tent or lying on the ground. otherwise an attack from the angels, known as *amr ardîya* (a decree from the ground) could result in rheumatism or even madness (Bailey, 1982:68). Jinn people a universe which mirrors the human reality and constantly threaten the balance of life. Both named and unnamed jinn exist. In Egypt Um al-Şubyân is recognized as a named jinn that especially attacks pregnant or parturient women and their offspring. Certain precautions are taken before, during, and for forty days after, birth to prevent harm of Um al-Şubyân from touching a family. Prophets are seen as living beings of the transempirical world who may help ordinary Muslims in their everyday living and in their prospects of attaining paradise at death. The pronouncing of the *taşliya*, the *quyyâm* (standing to chant praise of the prophet Muhammad) at *Mawlid al-Nabî* and other festivals, the recitation of religious *qasîdas*⁴ and the use of prophets' names in talismans, all seek to employ the positive qualities of these persons, especially Muḥammad, on behalf of the contemporary Muslim. Dead saints and the shrines associated with them are seen

¹ *baraka*: literally 'blessing; benediction or charisma from God'.

² *hajj*: pilgrimage.

³ *hadîth*: 'tradition' in Islam.

⁴ *qasîda*: traditional Arabic poem.

as bearing considerably on the wellbeing in this life of the ordinary Muslim. Sayyid Aḥmad Badawî's mausoleum in Tanṭa in the Nile delta is the focus of pilgrimage several times a year. The shrines Ḥusayn, Shâf'î, Zainab and Nafisa in Cairo are frequently visited by Muslims seeking access to supernatural help in the pressure of immediate issues. Many other local saints' shrines throughout the country are also frequented. *Zâr* spirits, representing a phenomenon of possession in which the resulting procedure is to learn to live in relationship with the spirit as opposed to expelling it, are common beings in the cosmology of the ordinary Muslim. Fakhouri describes some instances of *zâr* possession and resultant relationship in a village situation some eighteen miles south of Cairo (1972:92–95). *Zâr* p. 250 celebrations remain common, though banned by law, amongst women of most social classes. Other named spirits, the familiar spirit, souls of the recently dead (on whose behalf at the grave and at certain intervals after death various ceremonies are performed) fill out the world of living beings in its transempirical manifestation. Within that world, some beings (most notably God himself and possibly the archangels and angels) exhibit other-worldly qualities. The rest belong more nearly to the tellurian domain.

Our brief exposition of a cosmology of popular Islam may be summarized in Figure 1.

In the cosmology of popular Muslim religion there is a plethora of being and a wealth of power. The personalities and forces emerge as being in constant tension. Life consists of avoiding negative influences and of harnessing positive ones in order for the Muslim man or woman to maintain a balanced position in the world of 'being'.

JESUS IN POPULAR ISLAM

Jesus, of course, 'fits' primarily into the concept of 'being' in the cosmological map of the ordinary Muslim. But the question of precisely where he fits within that concept is of importance for it determines the extent to which he may be appealed to for assistance, and it controls the range of powers to which he may have access. In these paragraphs, Jesus' place in the cosmology of popular Islam is deduced from *ḥadīth*, and most specifically from those collections made by al-Bukhârî and Muslim. Reference is also made to al-Tha'labî's *Stories of the Prophets* and al-Ghazzâlî's *The Revivification of the Religious Sciences*, for in these sources were deliberately gathered together some of the traditions concerning Jesus.

The *ḥadīth* interpret and uphold the Qur'ânic view that Jesus takes a place inferior to, and altogether separate from, God. As far as essential being is concerned the gulf is surely fixed. Jesus is titled in the Qur'ân 'a spirit from Him' and 'his Word which He cast upon Mary' (Sura 4:169).⁷ The *ḥadīth* uphold this strong distinction:

'Narrated 'Ubbâda: The Prophet said, If anyone testifies that None has the p. 251

⁷ Let us note that even with regard to Qur'ânic interpretation *per se*, it would be erroneous, in reflecting on the 'Word' of this sura and sura 3:40, to predicate a Western, Greek-based *logos* concept into that 'Word'. 'alî suggests in his commentary on this verse [171] that *kalima* is here equivalent to 'prophecy' (1951:234; note 652). This prophecy God cast (*ilqâ'*) in the sense of 'communicated' to Mary, *Rûḥ* he interprets as 'mercy'. 'alî makes the further point that even if *kalima* means literally 'word' and *rûḥ* means literally 'spirit', at most it can only indicate 'a word' and 'a spirit'.

'Narrated Ibn 'Umar: The Prophet said, I saw Moses, Jesus and Abraham (on the night of my Ascension to the heavens). Jesus was of red complexion, curly hair and a broad chest ...'

(*Ibid*:432)

Like other men, Jesus would err:

'[from Abû Huraira]: Allah's Messenger said: Jesus son of Mary saw a person committing theft: thereupon Jesus said to him: You committed theft. He said: Nay. By Him besides Whom there is no god (I have not committed theft). Thereupon Jesus said: I affirm my faith in Allah. It is my own self that deceived me.'

(Muslim, 1976:1262) p. 253

On the other hand, there are some unique qualities about Jesus. At his birth, Satan was outwitted and Jesus stands as the only human being not 'touched' or 'struck' by the evil one:

'Abû Huraira reported Allah's Messenger as saying: ... Every person to whom his mother gives birth (has two aspects of his life); when his mother gives birth Satan strikes him but it was not the case with Mary and her son (Jesus Christ).'

(*Ibid*:1399; cf. al-Bukhârî, 1979:426)

Miraculously, Jesus spoke from his cradle to correct others' misconceptions, the *hadîth* literature here underlying a point made in the Qur'ân itself (Sura 28; cf. al-Bukhârî, 1979:430). Jesus is especially remembered as a healer and miracle-worker:

'Ka'b al-Akbar said: Jesus, son of Mary, was a ruddy man, inclined to white; he did not have long hair, and he never anointed his head. Jesus used to walk barefoot, and he took no house or adornment, or goods, or clothes, or provision except his day's food. Wherever the sun set, he arranged his feet in prayer till the morning came. He was curing the blind from birth and the leper and raising the dead by Allah's permission and was telling his people what they were eating in their houses and what they were storing up for the morrow, and he was walking on the surface of the water in the sea. His head was dishevelled and his face was small; he was an ascetic in the world, longing for the next world and eager for the worship of Allah. He was a pilgrim in the earth till the Jews sought him and desired to kill him. Then Allah raised him up to heaven; and Allah knows best.'

(Quoted in Rahim, 1979:222)

Jesus now dwells in the second heaven (Muslim, 1976:105) and with his descent will come the end of the world and judgment (al-Bukhârî, 1979:436f.). At that time he will break crosses, kill swine and abolish the *jizya*⁸ (Muslim, 1976:1517–1520). Meanwhile, from his place in heaven Jesus is accessible for intercession. Muslim cites a *hadîth* in which Jesus is approached as a potential intercessor but proves to be inadequate (1976:131). Rahim quotes another *hadîth* in which Jesus' powers as intercessor appear to be quite considerable:

'It is related that Jesus, peace be upon him, one day passed a hill in which he saw a cell. He drew near it and found in it a devotee whose back was bent, whose body was wasted, and in whom austerity had reached its utmost limits. Jesus saluted him and wondered at his evidences (of devotion) which he saw. So Jesus said to him, "How long have you been in p. 254 this place?" He replied, "For seventy years I have been asking Him for one thing which he Has not granted me yet. Perhaps you, O Spirit of Allah, may intercede for me concerning

⁸ *jizya*: a tax payable by a community which accepts the protection of a Muslim ruler but whose members do not embrace Islam.

it; then possibly it may be granted.” Jesus said, “What is your requirement?” He replied, “I asked Him to let me taste the amount of an atom of His pure love.” Jesus said to him, ‘I shall pray to Allah for you about that.’ So he prayed for him that night, and Allah, Exalted is He, revealed to him, “I have accepted your intercession and granted your request.” ...’

(1979:226)

Jesus, from his position in the heavens, and as a result of the person he is, plays the role of successful mediator for the devotee. In such respects, Jesus is more than an ordinary mortal. In other respects Jesus is definitely angelic. A *ḥadīth* from Wahab relates:

‘So when God commanded Jesus to come down to [Mary Magdalene] seven days after His ascension, He came down upon her, and a mountain burned with light when He came down. So the disciples gathered together, and He sent them out into the world to call men to God. Then God took Him up, and clothed Him with feathers and covered Him with light; and deprived Him of all desire for food and drink. And He flies with the angels around the throne. So He is human and angelic, and earthly and heavenly.’

(al-Thaḥlabī, 1865:255; quoted in Zwemer, 1912:105)

As prophet, as angelic, as ‘Spirit’, as miracle-worker, healer, raiser of the dead, as untouched by Satan, as mediator-intercessor, Jesus fills a place in the folk-Islamic cosmology which is transempirical and potentially other-worldly. Rickards concludes from his study of the Jesus of the Qur’ān, *tafsīr*⁹ and *ḥadīth*:

‘Īsā was not a man in the sense that human beings are men. He never lost his creature-status but retained his spirit nature. This was distinct from the nature of angels although he shared with them, as he did with the men to whom he ministered, many apparent qualities.’

(1969:194)

Sometimes, it seems, the manifestations of Jesus’ creature status proved stronger, sometimes those of his spirit nature. The existence of this being in the cosmological map of popular Islam invites petition and trust.

CONCLUSIONS

In the cosmological map, then, of the ordinary Muslim, Jesus occupies a special position as a unique being Non-divine, created, he may be. **P. 255** But as creature, his remarkable birth, his rôle at judgment time, his Special relation to Muḥammad, his power over disease, death and nature, his angelic and spirit-like qualities, his ability to mediate before God, his superior relationship to Satan—all speak of a special person. The cosmology of the ordinary Muslim, as with the strict tenets of Qur’ānic exegesis, allows no possibility of a God/Man, of a mediator in the sense of divine incarnation. But it would seem that Jesus’ unique person and position invite the devotion and petitions of ordinary Muslims as they find themselves in disequilibrium. Jesus stands out as a person/prophet/angel/spirit who can be touched by their needs and who has power in himself or access to power in order to aid them.

So Jesus is appealed to for healing, as in the case of Ḥanân. So Jesus is included as a potent name in amulets and talismans. Gimlette quotes a Malay charm cure for sufferers from poison in which the Brahminical intonation of ‘*Om*’ is combined with invocation of

⁹ *tafsīr*: science of exegesis of the Qur’ān.

the name of Allah. Jesus is named as father of the charm, guarantor of the success of this spell:

'Om! This is a powerful charm!
The charm of the hundred and ninety [diseases].
Not my own spell, but that of all that is deadly!
Poison! well wot I thee born of the deadly water,
Born of the green and deadly berry!
Fain would I charm thee from out this body!
Obey not and I will curse thee with the cursings of
Jesus, father of all the charm.
In the name of Allah.'

(1929:52; quoted in Osman, 1967:145)

Within the beliefs and practices of ordinary Muslims, appeal is already being made to Jesus. Maybe that appeal is as superstitious or inadequate as the touching of Jesus cloak by the woman with an issue of blood ([Matthew 9:20ff.](#)). But within the cosmological map of the ordinary Muslim it is not unnatural for that Muslim to turn to Jesus in times of disequilibrium.

In the Christian's encounter with ordinary Muslims it would appear appropriate to emphasize the miraculous birth of Jesus, his authority over Satan, his healing and deliverance ministries, his raising of the dead, his 'nature miracles', his existence now in heaven and his return at the time of judgment. But equally emphasized must be his authority *today* to act on behalf of mankind, to intervene miraculously in crises or situations of disequilibrium. The Jesus of popular Islam must come 'p. 256 alive' as the Lord of all in men and women's experience in their contemporary circumstances. Jesus' demonstrated ability to meet felt-needs may be a starting-point for ordinary Muslims, close to their own appreciation of him, from which they can move, as the healed Hanân did, to fuller understanding, faith and obedience. The emphasis is thus concentrated as much upon the experiential as upon the cognitive as far as ordinary Muslims are concerned. The hope of making such accommodation to the worldview of the ordinary Muslim lies, happily, in the strong promise of Holy Spirit-enabled communicating of a life-changing, experience-oriented, gospel. The final question then becomes: are Christians really faithful encounter-bearers of their living Lord?

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Dr. Bill Musk is the Assistant Minister of All Saints' Cathedral, Cairo, Egypt. p. 258

Modern Technology: Idol or Divine Gift?

Paul Marshall

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The topic of technique and technology is massive. Technique refers to 'how-to' do something—it is the science of 'how'. It encompasses all that we can do—from going to the moon to public speaking, from thermo-nuclear bombs to making love, from serving our starving neighbour to writing articles. All of these are included when we talk about technique.

The correlate of technique is technology, which is the reified, made, created, embodied structure of technique. Technology includes, in one form or another, all those things which are not *naturally* occurring, all those things which we shape and reshape. Technology infuses art as much as physics, families as much as engineering.

Hence, to talk about technique and technology is to talk in a particular way about all of human life, as all of human life has a technical aspect. This is obviously a big undertaking. So, in order to bring the subject down to size, I will talk about technology only in one way—a 'religious' way. This means I will not talk about what such things as computers (or communications technology, or nuclear fusion or fission, or cloning, or genetic manipulation, or oil sands plants) do or might do. Rather, I will focus on technology as a basic aspect of our lives. I will focus on our commitment and trust in it, on the vision of life it embodies, and the type of world and type of people we are making through technology.

VIEWS OF TECHNOLOGY

The word, technology conjures up thrilling visions: the brilliant illusions of ‘Star Wars’; pictures of men on the moon—beamed direct to the living room; computers; robots; lasers; heart transplants; cloning. Slightly more mundanely, we can fly the length of the country in a few hours, buy food from around the world in our local store, show movies on our own T.V., light and heat our homes at the flick of a switch.

Darker visions also come: assembly lines reducing the lives of men and women to the rhythms required by machines; poisoned rivers and stripped forests; complete surveillance of our lives; mammoth, distant organizations; Trident submarines to produce lingering deaths for entire continents. [p. 259](#)

Technology brings both promise and fate, blessing and curse. Those of us reading this article have been liberated from the life of a peasant, our working day has been reduced in length, the number of choices in our lives has increased. But the poor of the world have become poorer; the social world has become more massive and alien; and we do not know if the world we are re-creating is one which can or will sustain healthy human (and non-human) life.

Our technical achievements come from us, and back to us, fraught with contradictions. Our own responses to this technology show the same contradictions. This contradiction is true also of Christian views of technology, which cover a bewildering range. There is, of course, the view that the Christian faith has nothing at all to say about, or to, technological development because the gospel is concerned with different questions entirely. Since we are already discussing the topic, I think we can disregard that view. But, if the gospel does speak to technology, what does it say?

On the one hand many Christians, particularly conservative ones, give uncritical praise for technological innovation. They are concentrated in, and are often the leading lights in, the physical sciences. Why? One reason is that these sciences are thought to be safer and more unproblematic—less likely than psychology or sociology to upset cherished beliefs. Another is that they are thought to be, without much further question, a way of following God’s command to subdue the earth. Such Christians are often in the forefront of technical developments in computers and the physical sciences.

On another hand we find Jacques Ellul, the brilliant French Christian sociologist. Ellul portrays technology and technique as demonic powers, determining an inexorable system which devours human life, destroys all intrinsically human relations, and drives human freedom into the gradually closing cracks and interstices of a technological monolith.

Ultimately I do not think we can follow either of these directions, not because I believe in moderation, or some sort of golden mean (I don’t), but because I think they’re wrong directions.

Ellul, I feel, still underplays the fact that behind all technology and technique still lies human act and decision. I do not mean an individual decision, as though we could decide one thing about technology today and another tomorrow. Individual decisions usually really are bounded by technical, external, shaping forces. But we can say that behind the pattern of technological developments still lies a deep-rooted, society-wide commitment, we may biblically say ‘a religious commitment’, to a certain view of life, a vision of progress, a [p. 260](#) hope of salvation through knowledge and expertise. This commitment underlies and shapes our decisions, choices, and programmes. And such commitments can be changed while the power of God’s Spirit yet touches us.

Those who accept technological development as progress, and those who think it is ‘neutral’, make a similar mistake. They also miss the inescapable elements of human

responsibility in all technical developments: they treat it as if it were ‘natural’ and not a weighing of alternatives by human beings.

This element of human responsibility is always manifest to us in the Scriptures. The Bible shows the curse which is upon those who do evil, those who serve false gods; it shows us the blessing, the *shalom*, which comes to those who serve God and live justly, stewardly and faithfully. And this curse and blessing is also shown in technology.

THE BIBLE ON TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Goodness of Technology

In [Genesis 2](#) humankind is not created as some complete, independent being. We are created together with our earthly environment: space to live in, food, the injunctions to work, and to enjoy companionship. The Creator provides food, not as manna from heaven, but by telling man and woman to plant and to care for the garden in which they are set.

This contrasts strongly with common mythical views in which either good things were produced by the gods, who give them to man, or else men were taught to produce by cultural heroes—demigods. It is also in radical contrast to the Prometheus myth where fire is stolen from the gods, a myth which symbolizes that human freedom and creation must be wrenched free from a hostile divinity or, in the modern age, a hostile nature.

In the biblical account, the power of the Creator’s blessing enables us to grow up and grow into technical and technological activities. It is both the gift of God and the fruit of human work and thought. Humankind is empowered by God to work with the world and to create.

Humankind is made in the image of God. It is not clear what this image is. But, as the context points to one in which God is creating, I would suggest that here the image of God, the way in which we are like God, refers to the fact that we are made creating beings.

The Scriptures show the drama of technical achievement as part of [p. 261](#) God’s dealings with us. Our life as humankind begins in the garden of Eden. Where does it end (as far as we can see)?—in the city, the New Jerusalem. This is God’s city, true, but it is God’s city, not God’s garden. The life of humankind through fall and redemption also involves shaping and forming the earth, moving from the garden to the city.

In Adam and Eve, we begin naked. In God’s city we appear clothed as a bride ([Rev. 21:2](#)). We become enclothed in the stuff of creation about us (see also [Hebrews 11:8–16](#)).

We are called to a city, a shaped environment, and so we cannot reject technology or technological development, for it is an essential part of what God has set us to do in and on earth.

The Evil of Technology

But the Scriptures also show the dark side of technology. The line of technical development is first followed through the genealogy of Cain, the first murderer ([Gen. 4:17–24](#)). It is Cain himself who builds the first city. Later the tower of Babel ‘with its top in the heavens’, the greatest architectural achievement of man, is portrayed as the culmination of sin. The fall of Adam and Eve—because they wished to be gods and no longer human beings—is replayed at Babel as a lust for power and greatness that overreaches human limitations. The result is that people no longer understand one another: they are driven apart, and hate one another.

This overreaching, this relying on achievement for recognition, security and power, is part of what Jesus criticizes when he says:

‘Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them ... do not be anxious, saying “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.’ ([Matthew 6:25–34](#))

The prophets developed part of this theme. They always linked any achievement, artistic, cultural or technical, with the way it had come into being. They did not accept as beautiful that which had been created through oppression or injustice. Habbakuk says:

‘Woe to him who builds a town with blood, and founds a city on iniquity! p. 262 For the stone will cry out from the wall and the beam from the woodwork respond.’ ([Hab. 2:12, 11](#))

And Isaiah:

‘For thou hast rejected thy people,
the house of Jacob,
because they are full of diviners
from the east
and soothsayers like the Philistines,
and they strike hands with foreigners.
Their land is filled with silver and gold,
and there is no end to their treasures;
their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.
Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of their hands,
to what their own fingers have made.
So man is humbled,
and men are brought low—
forgive them not!
... For the Lord of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up and high;
against all the cedars of Lebanon,
lofty and lifted up;
and against all the oaks of Ba’shan;
against all the high mountains,
and against all the lofty hills;
against every high tower,
and against every fortified wall;
against all the ships of Tar’shish,
and against all the beautiful craft.
And the haughtiness of man shall
be humbled,
and the pride of men shall be
brought low;
and the Lord alone will be exalted in
that day.’

[\(Isaiah 2:6-21\)](#).

Technical achievement is not autonomous. It can be evil and in the service of evil. The Scriptures call us to a technology rooted in the life of a people together, who serve one another. Technology itself is to be such a service. [p. 263](#)

THE STRUCTURE OF TECHNOLOGY

Modern Technology

The theme of blessing and curse is also revealed to us by God in the patterns of our own lives. This can be shown if we look at the structure of modern technology.

The important thing about modern technology is that no longer are we using a tool or a machine in some small area of an otherwise natural or personal world. We are not primarily using a plough or a tractor in the midst of a field. We are not using a technical thing in the midst of a non-technical world.

Rather, we now use technology within, among, as a part of a world which is itself shaped and made by past and present technology. We use a stove in the kitchen. We operate laboratories at the pinnacle of a technical education system. We have auto assembly lines, in the middle of a factory, served by technically trained employees, at the nexus of a network of roads, linked by the transport of raw materials, as part of an overall production process, linking other factories, and mines, and dealers, and drivers, carried on in the framework of technical laws and regulations and specifications developed to cope with it.

We live and act now within a technical world, one which in turn shapes and limits what we do. We decide and we act with the possible choices and options presented to us by a world which we (or others) have shaped, opened or constricted by our previous actions and techniques. When we use a tool, we shape a world which in turn shapes us, and which shapes not only what we do but also what we can do.

The Traps of Technology

The structure of modern technology shows that technologies are never 'neutral,—just tools happening to be lying around which we can use at will for either good or evil purposes. They become part of the structure of the world in which we live. Technologies always embody, promote and reproduce human commitments, beliefs and activities; they trap us by what we have already done; they can reduce our actions and our futures to mere extrapolations, extensions of our past (which is how most futurists make a living!).

This directional nature of technology can be shown in the example of a computer. Computers can be used for bad purposes—keeping track of political enemies, dehumanizing offices and banks, and [p. 264](#) causing unemployment by replacing people. Computers can also be used for good things—making word processing easier, keeping track of records, searching masses of data for key information, replacing boring, repetitive human work. Indeed many of our other new scientific and technological developments would be impossible without them.

Does this mean that the computer doesn't shape us and mould us? Does it mean that it's really only a question of how we decide to use it? Not at all—for a computer is much more than what it does. Consider:

(i) If we want to use computers, we have to be able to make computers. We need factories making silicon chips, factories to refine materials to a very high order of purity. We need metallurgical facilities, we need mills, we need mines, we need roads, we need electricity.

(ii) If we want to use computers, we need people who can work with them. We need high-level mathematical and engineering skills. We need trained graduates. We need universities and technical schools that can produce them. In turn, we need high schools to feed these, and grade schools to feed the high schools, and parents to encourage the children.

(iii) If we want to use computers, we need things to use them for. They need markets (even in a socialist country) which means many governments, firms and people have to use them. Patterns of business, work, research and communications need to be re-adapted for computer use. If we wish to use a computer, then we need more than one of them. We need to make them widespread throughout the society.

We can't just use a computer for worthwhile ends and so assume that nothing else matters. If we use a computer we have already dictated a large part of what our economics, communications, government, education and social patterns are going to be like. A decision for computers is inevitably a decision about what sort of society we are going to live in. The same is true with any technological development, even the very primitive. An archaeologist discovering a tool can tell you much of what a society was like, even of what it must have been like, to use that tool. When we use some technology we, in large part, determine what our world will be like.

In turn, when we determine what the world will be like, we also determine what we will be like. We are reshaping ourselves, our goals, hopes, fears, faiths and expectations. We live in a world that shapes what we think and do. For example, how many of us go home for lunch at lunchtime? Not many, right? How many of us even think [p. 265](#) about it? We don't think about it because it's not possible. It's no longer part of our world.

But, not too many years ago, many of us went home for lunch, and so did our children. We didn't take it for granted that the family must be apart for all the working day. But we've lost that, gradually and without noticing it. Now we know, without thinking about it, that we work too far away. The buses aren't convenient and the traffic is a problem. We don't even try anymore, we just face up to 'reality'—but it is a 'reality' that we have helped create both without realizing it and without counting its cost. We don't feel a loss of freedom for the new sense of reality has seeped even into our consciousness.

So, when we shape the world, we shape our own lives. We open up new possibilities for life, but we close down others. The world we are shaping and have shaped becomes what we now call reality, and, of course, we must be realistic, so we adjust and accommodate ourselves to what we have made and we do not know what we have lost. We begin to remake ourselves in the image of our technology and, where that is deficient or unjust, then we become deficient and unjust also.

IDOLATRY

Perhaps the best way of portraying the evils produced in modern technology is by means of what the Bible calls idolatry. In the Scriptures no one is an atheist; rather, if someone does not worship and serve the one true God, he will worship and serve another 'god'. These 'other gods' are things given in creation, or else the works of our hands, which we bow down before and worship.

Habakkuk says ([Hab. 2:18-19](#)):

'What profit is an idol
when its maker has shaped it,
a metal image, a teacher of lies?
For the workman trusts in his
own creation

when he makes dumb idols.
Woe to him who says to a wooden
thing, Awake;
to a dumb stone, Arise!
Can this give revelation?
Behold, it is overlaid with
gold and silver,
and there p. no breadth at all in it.'

Paul describes idols as: [p. 266](#)

'a representation by the art and imagination of man'

[\(Acts 17:29\)](#).

And he condemns

'worshipping the creature rather than the Creator'

[\(Romans 1:24\)](#).

The worship of idols was and is not a formal, purely liturgical matter; worship is always a matter of the ultimate commitments we have, of the deepest choices that we make (cf. [Col. 1:5](#)). To worship an idol is to trust it concretely as a god for your salvation. To worship an idol is to trust the work of your hands, to rely on it concretely in your day-to-day life. And, in turn, as the Psalmist says ([Psalm 135:15–18](#)):

'The idols of the nation are silver
and gold,
the work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they speak not,
they have ears, but they hear not,
they have eyes, but they see not,
nor is there any breath in their mouths.
Those that trust in them are like them!
Yea, every one who trusts in them.'

We become shaped by our idols—we start to become like them. They become the touchstones of our lives. We, in turn, become captive to them, and frozen and rigid like them. But they are dead and cannot liberate us.

MANIFESTATIONS OF IDOLATRY

We should understand the modern fixation on technology as a definite form of idolatry. We rely on technology for salvation—we hope in it to bring us prosperity; we worship it—we trust in it to solve the world's problems; it is the work of our hands which holds us captive; we become like it.

Is it too strong to call modern attitudes to technology a form of idolatry? I don't think so. Consider the following:

The sciences have set one of their goals as prediction. If we were to succeed in this, then we would know what will happen; we will become fated creatures, locked into a predetermined treadmill as our heavy paces bring us, willing or not, to the predetermined end.

Or consider that the control of nature always implies the control of some people by other people by means of nature. As the Director for science and Technology of the U.N. Department for Economic and Social Affairs said: [p. 267](#)

'In recent centuries, however, the world has been increasingly dominated by a dualistic world-view in which the distinction between man and his environment has been particularly stressed. This view accepts as a virtual axiom that man's foremost task consists in the progressive establishment of complete mastery over all of non-human nature. But, in recent times, man has tended to become so dominant on earth that he is now approaching a position where he constitutes one of the principal aspects of his own environment and in which environmental mastery would require the subjugation even of human nature by man.'

Or consider the increasing problems we face. Certain vital raw materials and energy reserves are being used up at a rapid rate. The number of species of plants and animals is decreasing rapidly. The fundamental chain of life in the oceans is being threatened. Pollution of the environment is still accelerating—not only in the sense that the beauty of the natural world is being destroyed, but that its fundamental ability to reproduce itself is under basic attack. We drive on to massive energy projects even when we know a quiet methodical conserving is cheaper and healthier. The psychical pressure of life in our times causes frustrations that border on shock. In society, the technical possibilities determine what we will do; governments in the West merely play 'catch up'. We replace persons with machines to boost production, but we increase structural unemployment—people who are surplus, discarded, wasted. Most surveys in Canada show that those in 'undeveloped' regions are happier than those in 'developed' ones. Clearly, therefore, we are not creating an environment designed for real human wellbeing.

In the face of these problems—problems which, at least in part, are due to our technical accomplishments—our response is invariably a technical one, a 'know-how' solution (let us increase this, decrease that, install machines, retest, advertise, invent, replace). We resist, or scoff at, or label as 'idealistic' or 'unrealistic', responses which at their core call humans to responsibility—scientifically, politically and personally. We act as if the manipulation of things external to us, or the manipulation of other people as if they were external to us, will solve our problems, even though it is clear that this externalizing is itself at the root of much of what we face.

We might rightfully claim that we did not intend these results, that they were side effects and unforeseen. But we must heed the words of Northrop Frye: 'In what our culture produces, whether it is art, philosophy, military strategy, or political and economic development, there are no accidents: everything a culture produces is equally a symbol of that culture.' [p. 268](#)

This is the world we are making by the technical transformation of our environment and of one another. If it produces things we did not foresee or want, then it shows that in our heart of hearts we are out of touch with reality, basically out of touch with what God's creation is actually like.

All these manifestations are clearly symptoms of what the Bible calls idolatry; we are being led astray as we set false goals for ourselves. Hence, in answer to the question with which I began—'Is technology out of control?'—I would answer yes. It has become an idol, and like all idols it now controls us.

COMMITMENT TO BREAK WITH THE IDOL

How are we to respond to this situation? By rejecting technology? Certainly not, for, as I have tried to show, God has made us creatures who refine, who shape, who create. We

need technical developments—even if we sought to reject them we would make them anyway.

But what we must do is to break with the idol of technology—the idea that we can achieve what is good—health, wealth, happiness and security—through the manipulation and control of our human and non-human environments. We must break with the idea that expertise is the key to problems, and the idea that human freedom comes from human control. We must break with the urge which drives us to accept the more sophisticated as the better; the vision that identifies progress with technical accomplishment; the vision that says humans can be brought to fulfilment by manipulating them as we would manipulate objects.

Breaking away from such an idol is different from and much more than ‘finding new values’—as if we could just decide, out of the air, to want something else instead. We cannot ‘make’ new values or ‘find’ them as if they lay about us just waiting to be picked up. An idol is fundamentally religious, and we truly need, both as persons and as a society, a religious conversion. We must search out our most fundamental beliefs and commitments—what we really believe human life is all about, what God calls us to. We must be prepared to live a life where we do what the Lord requires of us—‘to do justice, to show mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.’ We must believe, day by day, in factories, workshops and laboratories, that the kingdom of heaven is to the poor in spirit, that it is the pure in heart who shall see God, that the meek shall inherit the earth. These are not moral norms for some transcendent realm; they are touchstones for the development of technology. [p. 269](#)

Within such a commitment we will ask how we may serve our neighbour, particularly the poorest; we will not ‘externalize’ effects, but will explore and accept responsibility for the consequences of what we do. In so doing we will no longer be driven by the work of our hands. And in so doing, we can rejoice in and will need all of our technical skills and expertise. We may liberate technology even as we are liberated from it.

Dr. Marshall is a Senior Fellow in Political Theory at the Institute of Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada. [p. 270](#)

The Right to be Human

Pablo Martínez

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INTRODUCTION

*You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created and have their being.*

We live immersed in a society whose atmosphere we breathe all the time. Like it or not, whether we realize it or not, our concepts and attitudes are moulded by the 'pattern of this world' ([Rom. 12:2](#)). In consequence, so is our whole outlook and behaviour. It is for this reason that the Apostle Paul urges his readers time and again in his letters not to allow themselves to be dragged along by the current of this world, not to pick up the ways of this age. As individual believers and as the Church we have a duty to review from time to time the extent to which our ideas and our conduct are a faithful reflection of biblical principles or are rather a subtle form of secularism.

One of the concepts that most demands our scrutiny today is the whole area of the rights and duties of man. Individualism leads to the dehumanization of others; we regard each other as objects rather than persons. The philosophy of instant gratification of desires (material, sexual or whatever) and, above all, ethical relativism make up a sociological picture in which the rights and responsibilities of man appear in very faded colours. 'Everything is alright, everything is allowed so long as it does not harm another.'

The problem is who decides, and when, that my behaviour is harming another. Because if I affirm 'my conduct harms nobody that can be a subjective truth, just the way I perceive it; but it does not necessarily correspond to an objective reality, and possibly my neighbour is thinking quite otherwise. Indeed, for today's Christians the topic of human rights and responsibilities is highly relevant. And believe it is we who are believers who have a clearer voice to raise on the topic in the midst of so much confusion and abuse. What is the message we must give? This article seeks to open up the answer briefly. [p. 271](#)

RIGHT FOUNDATIONS

First of all, and granted that it may be examined elsewhere in this issue, we must offer a brief summary of the biblical foundations of human rights. We will begin by approaching the question negatively. On what are human rights not based?

1. They are not based on the 'intrinsic goodness' of human beings—the idea—an old one—that 'we are all basically good'. Such anthropological optimism is anachronistic in a century that has seen some of the cruellest and blackest pages of human history. Nazi torture, the repression of dissidents by so-called medical and psychiatric means, the recent barbarity of the '*desaparecidos*'—those who have disappeared—in Argentina ... these are just a few examples of what we mean.

2. They are not based on total equality of temperament, ideas and aptitudes; the idea that we are all equal in ability, character, mental powers, and so on.

3. They are not based on any concession that the State makes, even though it may be a democratic one, nor even in the majority consensus which seeks or desires them. Even if, in free elections, human rights were voted down, we as Christians would have to stand up for them because they are a gift from God. He grants them to all men, independently of their personal or social situation or any other kind of external circumstance.

They are based on the right of God to carry out his purposes in relation to man, history and nation, so that:

Man is more fully human
Life is more worthwhile and full
Society is more just

It is interesting to observe that in the OT the judgement of God on the pagan nations was based essentially on their crimes against humanity, such as torture. We see this theme expressed powerfully in the minor prophets (see, for example, [Amos 1:3–2:3](#)).

They are based on the creation of God. They are rights written into the very nature of man called to fulfil himself as a person and to live in harmony with his fellows. One of the most distinctive traits of the Christian faith and of the biblical revelation is that it gives to man an intrinsic personal dignity. This too does not depend on any external circumstances but on the fact that we were created in the image of God and bear, every one of us, the divine imprint.

They are based on the redemptive act of God. God has a ‘right’ over [p. 272](#) us for a double reason: because he made us and because he ransomed or redeemed us. This act, moreover, increases the value and the worth of every person before God. Each and every one of mankind was ‘precious and of great worth in the sight of God’.

To sum up at this point, as Christians we defend human rights on the basis of eternal principles: it is not merely a humanistic motive of ‘a better and more humane society’. The defence of human rights is tightly bound up with the defence of the rights of God and the vindication of his name on Earth. God has the supreme right to be heard, adored and obeyed on Earth.

Hence we cannot speak of the rights of man without first mentioning ‘the rights’ of God. C. S. Lewis writes in *The Problem of Pain*: ‘the Christian has no more right than to be loved by God and even in this he must recognize that it is because He took the initiative’. There is no way that we can present our rights independently of God, seeing that all we are and have comes from him and his grace ([Ps. 24:1](#); [1 Cor. 4:7](#); [2 Cor. 5:18](#)). This is the first thing to realize; that for ourselves we have no right to lay claim to any right. It is only to the extent that we are children of God that we can and we must promote and encourage that which God desires to see on earth.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

Here we can mention concrete aspects which appear clearly in the O.T. They are ethical principles which have as their aim (as we have already observed) that man should be more fully human and should respect the sacred dignity of his neighbour. This results in a more fulfilled life and a more just society.

We could summarize these ethical principles (‘rights’ if we want so to call them) in four distinct dimensions.

1. The right to life itself

This is the most elementary principle. From its beginnings in the mother’s womb until its end, life is a gift from God and must be respected as such. Only God is entitled to take away a human life. ‘Behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades’ ([Rev. 1:18](#)).

And from the beginning of life we see that the unborn child is created by God: ‘For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb’ ([Ps. 139:13](#)). He is also owned by God: ([Ps. 22:10](#)) ... ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, [p. 273](#) before you were born I set you apart’ ([Jer. 1:15](#)). And he is also purposed by God: ‘your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be’ ([Ps. 139:16](#)).

From the earliest moment of the biblical revelation, with Cain’s murder of his brother Abel, the right to life is clearly established. The words of God ‘What have you done?’ resound strikingly in our ears (see the account in [Gen. 4:10–11](#)). And this is a constant in

the commands of God: life belongs to him alone, he who has said that ‘a bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not put out’ ([Is. 42:3](#)). Life, as the gift of God, is the most elementary of all human rights. This dimension (nowadays highly controversial for the west with the subjects of abortion, euthanasia and suicide) might well be rounded off with the words of Dr. Douglas Johnson: ‘A return to a rights personal relationship to God brings with it a desire and a power to do God’s will that is not experienced by those who try to keep the moral law without Him’.

2. The right to food and shelter

Two of the basic necessities of human existence are food and shelter from the elements ([1 Tim. 6:8](#)). There are numerous allusions in both Testaments to our daily bread. A satisfactory minimum of food (and ‘minimum’ has reference to quality as well as quantity) is one of the Lord’s ‘concerns’ for his children. From the first moments of Creation, giving Adam instructions on what he could eat ([Gen. 1:29–30](#)), through the provision of manna and other foods during the wanderings of the people in the desert, we find numerous examples of how God’s will is an adequate supply of food and drink for the human being. It is interesting to observe that one of the sins the Lord frequently denounces through his prophets is the hoarding of foodstuff (cf. [Num. 11:31–33](#); [Ex. 16](#); and elsewhere), because that demonstrates a lack of trust in the Lord (cf. [Matt. 6:25](#)) and because when I abuse my right—in this case to food—I am robbing another of the same right. Amos, Micah, Habakkuk and others denounce this sin. The Lord teaches us to ask for ‘our bread day by day’; anything further can become dangerous, especially if, by abusing my right, I am depriving my neighbour.

Obviously the concept of ‘food’ is closely linked to that of ‘work’. ‘By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food’ ([Gen. 3:19](#)). Paul gave a rule to the church in Thessalonica: ‘If a man will not work, he ^{p. 274} shall not eat’ ([2 Thess. 3:10](#)). The right to ‘daily bread’ is closely linked to the right to work that will enable that bread to be earned.

We could say more or less the same of the right to ‘shelter’; a term which comprises not only clothing but a ‘place to lay one’s head’. That is how Jacob understood it when, in his situation of need, he asked God for three things: ‘food to eat’, ‘clothes to wear’ and to ‘return safely to my father’s house’ ([Gen. 28:20–21](#)).

However, we must not confuse the ‘right’ with an end in itself here either. The house is for living and not living for the house! We have to bear in mind that our ‘earthly tent’ can be folded up at any moment ([2 Cor. 5:1](#)) and that we are here as strangers and pilgrims. The people of the O.T. had fallen into the error and sin of turning the dwelling place into an end and not a means: ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?’ ([Hag. 1:4](#)). ‘Give careful thought to your ways’ (v. [5](#)) is what the Lord Almighty says.

3. The right to health

Here we mean the word ‘health’ in its most biblical sense, as the Hebrews understood it. Interestingly it is a sense taken over by the WHO in its definition. ‘Health is the state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not only the absence of sickness’. It is the ‘*shalom*’ of the Hebrews, the peace that is not only the *absence* of warfare but which is defined above all in positive terms: the *presence* of a wellbeing that touches our bodies, our minds and our relationships.

The great contribution of the biblical concept of health is its positive character and its holistic vision of man. ‘Its positive character’ because it is not simply defined in terms of the absence of sickness. I believe that the importance of preventive medicine has its origin here. Throughout the Bible we find a great emphasis on prophylaxis which culminates

especially in the laws of hygiene of the Pentateuch (see Leviticus). This is true to such an extent that secular Medicine recognizes Moses as the 'father' of Preventive Medicine. Why? Because God has always cared about this global, integral health of man. And none of his commandments have a capricious or arbitrary reason but rather all contain something of this preventive medicine. Note, for example, the commandment to 'remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour, but the seventh is a Sabbath [i.e. a day of rest] to the LORD your God' ([Ex. 20:8-10](#)). There is an element which has to do with the vertical relationship with God: [p. 275](#) the day is 'to' the Lord. But it also contains a basic principle, regular period of rest. To disregard this leads, as we see in many cases, to problems of exhaustion and stress. It is a benefit for the health of man himself. We can certainly affirm here that a life lived subject to God's principles will be 'health to your body and nourishment to your bones' ([Prov. 3:5-8](#)).

Health, physical, mental and spiritual, is a human right because God has always done battle against sickness, just as Jesus did during his earthly ministry. Hence the Christian, as his opportunities and gifts permit, is called to prevent sickness, relieve suffering and encourage everything that increases the wellbeing of his neighbour.

At this point we must call attention to a responsibility. Health care is not only a right but also a duty, seeing that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. When Paul tells Timothy 'Watch your life' I do not imagine he would have been thinking exclusively in spiritual terms ([1 Tim. 4:16](#); cf. [5:23](#)).

4. The right to hear the gospel

In secular terms we would call this 'religious freedom'. In Spain we have a long history of repression and persecution directed against the Gospel. For that reason I am very sensitized to this point, but I will be brief in my comments.

Every human being has the right to hear the message of eternal life that God offers in Christ and to respond to that message. And we see that the right to religious freedom is at the base and is the essence of every other human right. History offers numerous examples of how the principle of liberty of conscience and of meeting together to worship God freely (and not only at the individual level) has in the long run brought freedom for other activities such as education. As has been remarked elsewhere: 'The implications of religious liberty run through the core of all the other liberties: freedom of speech, of the press, of thought, etc. Because it aims to accept the principle that man is more than a subject of the State'.

These words, in conclusion, lead us back to what has already been said: the guarantee of the rights of man rests upon the right of God, the right which God has over man to be heard, worshipped and obeyed. The determination to be free can only be understood, ultimately, in the one who has said: 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free' and 'I am the way, the truth and the life'.

Let us remember finally that my neighbour's rights are my responsibilities. Therefore as individual Christians, as God's Church, [p. 276](#) and as Christian families, we are called to encourage and promote all that bears upon the right to life, the right to food and shelter, the right to health and the freedom to worship the Saviour together. In this way we shall experience more fully the words of Jesus when he said 'I have come so that they might have life, and have it in abundance'.

Dr. Pablo Martínez practises as a psychiatrist in Barcelona, Spain. [p. 277](#)

Pastoral Ministries

Jesus Cleanses the Temple: An Exposition of Matthew 21:12–17

Sunand Sumithra

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This farewell sermon of Dr. Sunand Sumithra was delivered in the Chapel of Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, West India on 4th September 1985.

INTRODUCTION

This event of Jesus cleansing the temple is one of the few incidents in Jesus' life which is reported by all the four evangelists ([Mark 11:15–17](#), [Luke 19:45–46](#), and [John 2:13–22](#)). But while John reports it at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the other evangelists report it at the end. Possibly there was more than one cleansing. Clearly the Matthean account took place after Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

The fact which is significant for our meditation on this passage is that soon after his triumphal entry into the city, 'Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all those who were buying and selling there, he overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves' ([Matthew 21:12](#)). Mark adds, 'Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything but since it was already late he went out to Bethany with the twelve' ([Mark 11:11](#)). This clearly shows that the cleansing was not an on-the-spot decision of Jesus; rather it was a deliberately thought-through plan.

THE TEMPLE: SIGNIFICANT IN JESUS' MINISTRY

What did Jesus actually do in this temple cleansing? Often this passage is so expounded as to mean that Jesus was a social revolutionary. It is said that he came to liberate the oppressed from their oppressors in the temple and bring economic justice to the poor Jews. He was therefore against the establishment—the temple authorities. On the basis of such an interpretation many Christians demand the participation of the Church in the socio-economical revolutions of our time. But there are several exegetical considerations which are against such an interpretation.

If Jesus' intention was to liberate the poor Jews from their exploiters, he should have taken action against the oppressors of the time—namely, [p. 278](#) the chief priests and the scribes, but in the passage we see that he is driving out the *oppressed*. Of special significance is the fact that Jesus drove out the sellers of the doves. According to Moses' law, doves were the sacrificial animals of the poorest of the Jews, e.g., the family of Jesus offered doves as a sacrifice at his birth. As Matthew records, here Jesus is driving out both the sellers and the buyers of the doves—the poor people. Thus, in the passage there is no indication that Jesus sided with the poorest.

Neither was he against the oppressors, the established religious structures, the priests, the Pharisees, the chief priests, the scribes and the like. Besides the buyers and the sellers of the sacrifice animals, there were also other groups in the temple—the teachers and the pupils, the priests, the other rich worshippers, women and children,

Gentiles and so on. Jesus drives out none of them. He is against only one group, namely, those who had reduced religion to business. In fact in the passage we read that he came not to attack religion but to establish it. In verse [13](#), Jesus himself says, 'It is written, my house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.' For some the temple was the place of sacrifices, for others it was a business centre, for still others like the Zealots it was their meeting place. The Zealots were also called robbers at that time. What Jesus is saying here is: The temple is primarily not a place of sacrifice or business or a meeting place but rather it is a place to meet God; it is a house of prayer. Far from destroying religion Jesus is establishing it. And this is the first thing Jesus does after entering Jerusalem. He seeks the temple; he goes to it and cleanses it, even though he knew very well that his enemies would be there. He had already foretold that chief priests and scribes would arrest and kill him. These were already his enemies; therefore Jesus is cleansing the temple at great risk.

A third reason why this passage does not make Jesus a social revolutionary is this: Jesus did not use violence here (in the sense of harming life). All revolutions are drastic and radical changes in society and they inevitably disrupt society and so violence is present in one way or the other in all revolutions. Otherwise, they would not be revolutions, but merely evolutions.

John's gospel records, 'He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.' To those who sold doves he said 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my father's house into a market?' ([John 2:15, 16](#)). The whip of cords Jesus made was far different from the cruel Roman whip, with leather straps and lead balls and hooks to tear the flesh; and even this whip of cords he [p. 279](#) does not use on people but only on sheep and cattle. He is even gentler to the birds. He does not overturn their cages but tells those who sold doves, 'Get these out of here.'

What is more, to label Jesus a violent person on the basis of one single misinterpreted passage in the face of all his life and teaching which prove otherwise is a gross error. How can we forget his teaching, 'If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also' ([Matt. 5:39](#))? How can we forget his words to Peter, 'Put your sword back in its place' ([Matt. 26:25](#))? Beyond all this how can one forget his suffering and death on the cross? It is far from the facts to make Jesus out to be a violent person or a social revolutionary.

As a matter of fact, our passage clearly shows that Jesus was not a social revolutionary, but rather a temple reformer. He saw the significance of the temple, he went to it, he cleansed it.

THE CHURCH: SIGNIFICANT FOR OUR MINISTRY

If the above exposition is true we learn at least one thing from this passage; in spite of all the corruption and blindness and power-politics and commercialization of the temple, Jesus did not abandon it—but rather continued to reform it. Luke adds, 'Every day he was teaching at the temple' ([Luke 19:47](#)). The temple was still Jesus' method, the arena of his ministry. Similarly, though the Church of our time is often corrupt and full of weaknesses and court cases and immoralities and seems dead, we as ministers of Christ dare not abandon it. My desire in my new job in the Theological Commission of the WEF is to relate our Theological Commission more essentially with churches and congregations. After all, theology is a function not of theological seminaries, but of the Church. The Church is still the theological community and the hermeneutical community.

The Church is still God's instrument, despite all her failures. God's calling and gifts are irrevocable, especially with respect to the Church. I am convinced that for India as a nation, the Christian Church is the only hope. The desperate need of our land is for men of integrity, and the Church is still the sole factory where such men are produced. Even in the face of all the religious and secular philanthropic agencies sprouting all over the globe, the Church still stands as the philanthropic agency par excellence.

This means that we at the Union Biblical Seminary must re-emphasize our roots and links with our churches all over the land. It does not take a prophet to say that the Seminary will survive to the extent it is Church-rooted and Church-oriented. This Church-orientedness [p. 280](#) must come out not just in our theology, but in our budgets and future plans. I look forward to the day when all the teaching faculty in the Union Biblical Seminary will necessarily be pastors or people with pastoral experience and that our Church relations department will be given a priority status in our administration. Unless our Seminary deliberately and consciously plans to link with and serve the Church in India it will dissipate itself as an evangelical force in the land.

All this means for you and me as seminarians is that we dare not abandon the Church—rather we are called to work in it and work for it. Para-church organizations have come because the Church has failed, but they have come as the reform movements within the Church. The Church is still the base for us.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not asking you to support the Church so that she may survive. Far from it! I am asking you to serve the Church for your own survival as a Christian disciple and a Christian minister. Whatever her lapse, the Church, the little flock, has received the promise ultimately to triumph. Even with the Union Biblical Seminary's Bachelor of Divinity degree, my wife and I got just Rs 180 per month as salary when we pastored a church in Hutti. Those were years of great financial and social difficulties. Yet we have always looked back on these years in the pastorate as the best years we have had thus far. We found a complete job-satisfaction. Jesus did not abandon the temple; let us also not abandon the Church. Let us work for the Church's renewal.

THE CHURCH: THE SOURCE OF SOCIAL ACTION

Jesus not only sought the temple and sought to reform it, he not only taught there daily, but he also performed some social action there. "The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them" (v. [14](#)). It is very significant that as some miscreants were running away from him, there are two kinds of people who were coming to him—namely, the beggars, the blind and the lame on the one hand and children on the other. These were not scared of Jesus, though the money makers were. The blind and lame had come to beg in the temple, but Jesus gave them much more than they were begging for; he took away their blindness and lameness, and so he took away their need to beg, thus giving them a security beyond what they were asking for. This is real social action indeed!

Friends, the success of your ministry is measured not by how many bishops, tycoons and church leaders approach you, but rather by how many needy and humble come to you. You may not be in the good [p. 281](#) books of the big guns of your church, you may not be known in evangelical circles all over the land or the world, but if you are known among the sick and the poor and the needy, praise God! You have been successful! And if Jesus' experience is any model for us, then, to the extent you have a great ministry among the needy, and are met with 'Hosanna to the Son of David' ([Matt. 21:15](#)) by insignificant people, to that extent your chief priests and scribes will be indignant at you. 'But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area "Hosanna to the Son of David", they were indignant'

(v. 15). They were indignant not at the children—at least not primarily as we have already seen. Jesus had foretold that it was the chief priests and the teachers of the law who would kill him, and these were aware that day by day Jesus was becoming more popular and more problematic to them. Jesus entered Jerusalem royally, they also knew that the whole city had received him as the Messiah. And this was exactly what they were opposing, the messiahship of Jesus. They had come to the temple in order to question him about this. Jesus did not fit in with their concept of Messiah, and so they were indignant at Jesus' 'blasphemous' claims. The children no doubt had caught the jumping and shouting 'Hosanna!' from the people at the Triumphal entry, and they had just continued with Jesus into the temple. So behind their question, 'Do you hear what these are saying?', the chief priests and the teachers are really asking, 'Is it true that you claim to be the Messiah? Are you the Messiah?' They wanted some concrete evidence about Jesus' blasphemy in order to legally arrest him.

Here we can see what I call the height of spiritual blindness of these leaders. On the one hand they heard the children shouting that Jesus is the Messiah, and on the other they saw with their own eyes, Jesus proving his Messiahship by healing the blind and the lame. According to the Old Testament only a Messiah could so heal. Not that they did not see the healing—the passage clearly tells us that they saw the healing and heard the children's shout simultaneously. Yet they rejected both! They rejected the evidence of messianic healing and they rejected the childish, or childlike proclamations because Jesus did not fit into their scheme of things. In contrast, it is the beggars and the children who had a better spiritual perception. Jesus' reply is equal to their question: 'Yes', replied Jesus, 'Have you never read "from the lips of children and infants, you have ordained praise!"' (v. 16). 'And he left and went out of the city to Bethany' (v. 17). It is very unlike Jesus to leave so abruptly and end his conversation with them, especially as they were the leaders of the temple. The Lord seems to be p.282 grieved and angry with these leaders. He was grieved because they were so blind to facts and he was angry because as leaders they led people astray. So his answer really was: 'Yes I am the Messiah!' But they did not believe!

May God save each of us from such spiritual blindness. It is very possible that in real life situations, we too face such tests. It can be very difficult for you and me when we are in ministry, to accept for example, the fruitful work of some unimportant person, youth or lady or layman; it is easier to encourage and appoint those who are rich and influential. It is a great and very difficult virtue to recognize fruits and maturity in others, but so easy to find their loopholes and weaknesses. We can even misquote Scriptures to prove this! Jesus shows in the passage that the teachers and the priests were blind not only to the facts but also to the Scriptures! They read, but did not understand the Scriptures.

THE ROLE OF SMALL GROUPS/HOUSE-CELLS

'And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night' (v. 17). Jesus avoided Jerusalem as prophesied in the Scriptures as a judgment on the city. He stayed at night in Bethany just 3 km away from Jerusalem. Matthew does not tell us much about Bethany; the only other instances of his mentioning Bethany are when Simon the leper of Bethany invites Jesus for a Supper, and where Mary anoints Jesus' feet with costly oil. Luke tells us that it is the place from which Jesus ascended into heaven after his resurrection. But John gives more information: it is in Bethany that the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus was situated, where Jesus habitually stayed. Jesus was intimately attached to this family. It is here that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and many Jews believed in Jesus. Thus, Bethany was Jesus' headquarters in Judea, just as Capernaum was his headquarters in Galilee.

The significance of this for us is this: In Bethany there was a house-church which Jesus founded and identified. The Bethany House Church appears often in Christian traditions and legends. This means that Jesus sought the fellowship of this Bethany cell, while he sought to reform the top-heavy Jerusalem temple. This is typical of our Lord. For example, though he chose twelve apostles, out of them he chose three for an inner circle, with whom he more often shared. We will do well to follow his model, it is possible that as a minister you will be isolated from all Christian fellowship. Often Bishops and the big church leaders have confessed such an isolation and have become spiritually dry. It is p. 283 impossible to live and work as isolated Christians. As ministers it will be a great strength for us to seek out two or three believers from our area and have regular fellowship and prayer with them. Without the undergirding of such an inner circle, our fruits, vision, even our faith can be in danger of being lost.

At this juncture in our church history the exhortation to Indian Christian ministers must therefore be: Never abandon the Church, the needy and humble as marginal in your ministry. Guard yourself against spiritual blindness by developing both a genuine openness to other and the fellowship of an inner circle.

Dr. Sunand Sumithra is the Associate Executive Secretary of the Theological Commission of WEF at Bangalore, India. p. 284

Book Reviews

FAITH AND CHURCH

The Present-Day Christological Debate

by Klaas Runia

Issues in Contemporary Theology, Series Editor I. H. Marshall
(Leicester: InterVarsity Press 1984)

Pp. 120, £4.50

Reviewed by R. Swanton in *The Reformed Theological Review*, May–August 1985

The substance of this book was originally presented as a paper for the Third Conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians held at Wölmersen, West Germany, in 1980.

The bird's eye view of modern Christological discussion commences with Barth, a dominant influence in the second quarter of the century, who was firmly rooted in the incarnation theology 'from above' of Nicea and Chalcedon, although his early theopascheitic tendency and later covenantal emphasis were to give some incentive to new trends. Of theologians within the last 20 years in the Barthian tradition, going beyond but not contradicting Chalcedon with its *vere Deus, vere homo*, stand Pannenberg and Moltmann, though the former's preferred methodology is a Christology 'from below', and the latter's speculative construction at certain points Hegelian rather than Scriptural.

On the other hand the 'kerygmatic Christ' of Bultmann was to evoke the reaction among post-Bultmannians of the taking of the historical Jesus as their starting point. All

the other writers considered, both Roman Catholic (with some strictures from the magisterium) and Protestant, are regarded as having abandoned Chalcedon, with Jesus Christ being no more than man. These include P. Schoonenberg, E. Schillebeeckx, H. Küng, J. A. T. Robinson, H. Berkhof and the contributors to the symposium, *The Myth of God Incarnate*. Whilst it is admitted that the strength of these writers lies in their emphasis upon the humanity of Jesus Christ, and that the New Testament does not contain a full scale Nicene Christology, yet it is asserted that all New Testament writers place Him on the side of God with the earliest having a high Christology, the source of the development, in which the resurrection was a decisive turning point, being the consciousness of Jesus. By contrast in the alternative Christologies this continuity breaks down. Whilst recognizing the limitations of a concise sketch, more consideration could have been given to this central issue. It is concluded that 'nearly all alternative Christologies opt for a functional Christology over against an ontological Christology ... they all share the same essential thrust: Jesus is not God; He is God's agent or p. 285 representative' (p. 93). But from the beginning the work and person of Jesus Christ are inseparable in their complementarity, for to quote R. H. Fuller, 'action implies prior being' (p. 96).

With its clear indications of the essential elements of Christological truth and the boundaries of Christological error, Runia, nevertheless, concurs that Chalcedon is not the final word, in that 'it does not specify the relationship between Christ's ontological constitution and His redemptive mission ... What is abundantly clear, however, is the fact that the Church believed that the mystery of Christ's coming can be expressed only in incarnation terms' (p. 105).

This perceptive critical survey of current discussion cogently indicates the Arian and Unitarian affinities of alternative Christologies which open the way to a moralistic deformation of the Gospel. A useful bibliography will enhance its value for students.

EXEGESIS

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich

Abridged in One Volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley

(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. Exeter: Paternoster, 1985)

Reviewed by Charles Villa-Vicencio in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, December 1985

The massive, nine volume, exceedingly expensive 'Kittel'—widely regarded as the best New Testament Dictionary ever published—has been condensed into a single volume of 1356 pages. Footnotes and bibliographical references included in the unabridged edition have been eliminated while philological, archeological and other supporting materials have been drastically reduced. This makes it possible to include all the entries found in the original nine volumes in this abridged edition. Cross-references to the original volumes are provided for more detailed research. Hebrew and Greek words are transliterated, providing the abridged Kittel with an appeal among students and preachers who have little or no knowledge of Greek. Tables of Greek and English keywords are included to facilitate quick reference and the investigation of particular words.

The focus of the 'little Kittel' on biblical and especially New p. 286 Testament usage provides exegetical preachers, teachers and students with a quick reference tool of invaluable significance for biblical and theological work. Bromiley, who has probably done more than any other scholar to provide the English-speaking world with access to German scholarship, has now succeeded magnificently in placing this condensed and

simplified reference book within reach of many who find the unabridged volumes beyond their financial and technical reach. One word of caution. The entries are not strictly alphabetical in English. This is, however, an adjustment the reader quickly makes by referring to the Greek alphabet which is printed at the beginning of the volume. It is a highly recommended biblical-theological dictionary. While it cannot replace the monumental nine volume work, it does make this vital contribution to scholarship more accessible.

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

A Universal Homecoming?

by Ajith Fernando

(Evangelical Literature Service, Madras 1983)

Pp. 192, paperback

Reviewed by Sunand Sumithra

Here is a book from the third world which in its worth surpasses both its size and price several times over. It masterfully deals with one of the most relevant issues in the current theological debate—universalism. This is also a basic issue, for if all are ultimately saved, then evangelism loses its meaning, conversion becomes unnecessary and even the incarnation of Christ becomes useless.

The relevance of universalism arises in at least two other ways than those mentioned by the author. Thanks to the leaven of the gospel, for the first time in human history the human being finds worth as a person, as a free and responsible being with dignity. As such, especially in our time, every human being without discrimination becomes worthy of ultimate salvation. Secondly, as the Christian message encounters various religions and ideologies the exclusive claim for truth in Christianity sounds more and more arrogant. The doctrine of the cosmic Christ, which the theology of dialogue has [p. 287](#) developed finds salvation in all religions. If Christ is found in all religions and ideologies then there is no human being who is devoid of salvation in his own tradition. Evangelism becomes more and more difficult both in situations where religious pluralism is a stubborn fact as well as in situations where human liberation movements are at work attempting to bring back to every man his rightful dignity. No Christian work can ignore this fact.

However, Fernando tackles this problem of universalism not at the above empirical levels but at the basic levels where it matters—namely at the level of biblical exegesis. Starting with the Alexandrian Church in the second century where the first traces of universalism are to be found, namely with Clement and Origen, he makes a quick survey of the occurrences of universalism in church history. In the 20th century he analyzes the thought of several eminent thinkers such as C. H. Dodd, Ethelbert Stauffer, J. A. T. Robinson, Herbert Farmer, Nicholas Berdyaev, John Hick, William Barclay, Leslie Weatherhead, D. T. Niles, Ryder Smith and, of course, Karl Barth. Loaded with the questions and arguments these people raise, Fernando then turns to the biblical passages which are quoted to support universalism. The strength of the book is definitely in its exegesis of important relevant passages: [John 1:9, 29; 3:17; 4:42; 6:33; 12:32, 47; 17:21, 23; 1 John 2:2; 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:22f.; 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:18; Eph. 2:14. 1 Tim. 2:4, 4:10; Tit. 2:11; Phil. 2:10f.; 3:21; Col. 1:20](#). His finding that the Bible does speak of an irreversible final punishment is most convincing. Fernando's argument that most of these advocates of universalism mistake the universal victory of Christ for an ultimate universal homecoming is based on valid exegesis. For, though Christ's death was *sufficient* for the

atonement of all mankind, it is not *effective* universally. One whole chapter deals with this question of limited appropriation of the benefits of Christ's death.

In the last chapter, the author turns to some systematic questions which raise objections to the traditional limitarianism, all of which boils down to the one basic question: whether such an irreversible final punishment is compatible with God's love.

Here is one more case where we feel a lopsided doctrine of God emphasizing God only as love can lead to disastrous results. A proper understanding of God's holiness is undoubtedly an adequate antidote to universalism of any sort. As many of the reviewers have commented, the book can indeed become a textbook in the theological colleges especially to those who are grappling with this very crucial topic. I have no hesitation recommending this 'great small book' as one of the best available in the market. [p. 288](#)

Journal Information

Publications Referred to in this Issue

Christian Arena (formerly Christian Graduate)

A monthly journal, published by the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship Associates, 38 de Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GP, England.

Evangel

A quarterly review of biblical, practical and contemporary theology, published at Rutherford House, 17 Claremont Park, Edinburgh EH6 7PJ, Scotland. Subscriptions £4.95 U.K., \$14.00 U.S.A.

Presbyterion

A quarterly journal of the Eldership of the Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri 63141, U.S.A. Subscriptions \$6.00 per annum U.S.A. Single copy \$3.00.

Crux

A quarterly of Christian thought and action published by the faculty and alumni of Regent College, 2130 Westbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1W6. Subscriptions single copy \$2.50, \$9.00 per annum and \$16.00 for two years.

Journal for Theology for Southern Africa

A quarterly which encourages theological reflection and dialogue within the Southern African context, c/o Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, Cape, South Africa. Subscriptions: Southern Africa R8.00, elsewhere R15 or US \$15. Single copy R3.00.

The Reformed Theological Review

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