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*Articles and book reviews reflecting
global evangelical theology for the purpose
of discerning the obedience of faith*



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Evangelical Review of Theology

GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

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Editorial: Education, culture and faith

Education remains a key issue for Christians today, just as in the past. The opening article, a speech given at a secondary school jubilee by our General Editor, Dr Thomas Schirrmacher, presents a forceful argument for a biblically based but fully comprehensive educational philosophy with the aim of providing a school where Christian values and content are taught, exemplified and practised with full awareness of the cultural context.

It is appropriate to move on to a study by Jan Hábl (Czech Republic) of one of the most influential educators of the modern era, Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670). It focuses on the anthropological assumptions of his educational project, which is to be *humanitatis officinae*, ie., a 'forging-place of humanity'. Pointing to the significance of Comenius, Hábl states, 'In the context of the dehumanising tendencies of current society, pedagogical *humanisation* seems to be an urgent issue in contemporary education.'

Theological issues lie at the heart of this topic as much as they do with any other, so we present the proposal of Hanniel Strelbel (Switzerland) for a 'Theological Prolegomena of Education',—an exposition of the thinking of Herman Bavinck (1854-1921). This paper deals with the aims of education, the nature of humanity and certain areas of methodology as advanced by this famous Dutch Neo-Calvinist who was thoroughly immersed in educational matters and public life in a time of great turmoil. He had a comprehensive world-view, energised by a profound

theology which can still be of assistance today.

Although the exposition by John J. Davis (USA) of the meaning and significance of *perichoresis* (the relations within the godhead) may at first appear unrelated to our theme, it does show that in the broadest of ways the very nature of God is a crucial factor in our humanity, not least in regard to the notion of person. The author's list of practical implications could easily have been expanded to cover the topic of education and culture.

Jim Harries (Kenya) returns to our pages to explain how the categories of sin and taboo have become so confused as to cause both to disappear from view in the West. While taboo might be strange to western ears, Harries concludes it is 'a necessary category' and one 'that needs to be clearly recognized for the sake of the healthy functioning of non-western communities'. So we have moved into a non-formal area of learning and development, but one that it is just as important in its own context as the thought-provoking material presented in the other articles

We round off this issue with a practical article by Jonathan Cole (Australia) which sets out ways in which the disunity of the church in relation to doctrine and fellowship can be better understood and thereby overcome. Unless this problem can be tackled with integrity, any efforts to advance our thinking and practice in the area of education, culture and faith will be limited.

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

Education and Learning in Christian Perspective

Thomas Schirrmacher

I The Bible and Holistic Education

The question of education¹ is inseparably bound up with the central meaning of the written Word of God for Jesus' church. The particular New Testament text which most clearly teaches the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures unmistakeably describes the educational mandate of the Bible: 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting [or teaching] and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Tim 3:16-17). The verses prior to the ones just quoted (2 Tim 3:14-15) address the practical task of educating

the next generation.

The Old Testament law, in its own name for itself, had already significantly addressed the need for education. This is seen in the fact that the Hebrew word for 'law', which is *torah*, actually means instruction. God instructs people through his Word and his law. This Old Testament theme is developed in the New Testament, where we are told that the law was designed to be a tutor [Greek: *paidagogos*] to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:24).

Is education as described in the Bible only a matter of conveying biblical knowledge? Does it have to do only with educating character and spiritual qualities? Is it a matter of education only in the intellectual sense?

No, it has to do with all these things simultaneously. That is to say, it has to do with comprehensive, holistic formation and education, including all the spheres of life, and with making an individual 'thoroughly equipped for *every* good work' (emphasis added). This holistic orientation to education is seen in both the Old Testament *torah* and

¹ This essay was originally in the German language in which the terminology for education (usually school-oriented) and child rearing (usually family-oriented) are more closely linked with each other than is usually the case in English terminology. In this light, the author perceives close links between the theological and ethical principles of parenting and the principles of schooling. Ed.

in the New Testament description of God's purposes in giving us the scriptures. This holistic orientation should influence even how we define what theology is. John Frame appropriately defines theology as 'the application of the Word of God by persons to *all* areas of life' (emphasis added).²

Many Christians have a divided faith. While the Bible is responsible for internal, religious questions, varying standards are followed in questions relating to commerce, education, politics, or church policy. As fathers in the home some may live according to other values than those they pursue as representatives in parliament; as business men some may live according to other values than they pursue as church elders. Christians all too often have separated their knowledge of character, their knowledge of ethics, and their doctrine from each other.

What is so often asked for today, at least in the area of education, is a comprehensive, holistic view of life and the world—precisely what is often missing. Christian *parents*, at least in many cases when it comes to practice, educate the character of the child, while the *church* teaches them biblical knowledge, and the *school* conveys learning. Too seldom do we ask if these three entities educate according to different standards and to what extent this is helpful for the child.

In the Bible the comprehensive responsibility for education lies with the parents. They are responsible for teaching the children biblical knowledge, while the church's educational

programs can be only a supplement. Parents are to provide education to their children and to deal responsibly with this, in such a manner that teachers are always only an extended arm, mediating knowledge on behalf of the parents.

Here are some examples of what is to be learned

Deuteronomy 31: 12: '... so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law'.

Proverbs 1:2: '... for attaining [or learning] wisdom and discipline ...'

Proverbs 15:33: '... teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honour'.

Isaiah 26:9: '... learn righteousness.'

Isaiah 32:4: '... know and understand.'

Titus 3:14: '... learn to devote themselves to doing what is good ...'

In the Bible the words know, learn, understand, and teach are all terms which include one's intellectual side as well as the ability to practise correctly what has been learned.³ This becomes particularly clear from the fact that the word 'know' can be used also to designate the consummation of marriage (Gen 4:1,17,25; 19:8; 24:16; 1 Kgs 1:4; Mt 1:25).⁴ At this point, knowing comprises equally intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects.

² John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), 81.

³ Comp. Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 32-34.

⁴ Also according to Friso Melzer, *Das Wort in den Wörtern* (Gießen: Brunnen, 1990²), 112-113.

John M. Frame has shown that knowing in the Bible always expresses a covenantal relationship; for that reason, knowing God not only includes knowing something about God but also having a personal relationship with him and following him.⁵ In the Bible, knowledge is always both holistic and relational.

Can an individual, however, truly educate a child with only a Bible in his hand? Of course the answer is no, for the Bible does not say anything about many typical modern issues facing us. The Bible gives us the divine sense and the foundational orientation of educating a child, but nowhere does it go into detail about the specifics of a child's education. In the same way, the Bible prescribes an ethical framework but does not prescribe exactly how to live life.

Parents should bring up children 'in the training and instruction of the Lord' (Eph 6:4). They should make God and his Word dear to them (2 Tim 3:14-17) and prepare them to live a life on their own under God's authority within the order of creation. However, underneath this basic orientation there are only isolated commandments and pointers relating to the education of children. Christian parents are also called upon to implement this basic orientation toward education in daily life. In order to do this, they revert to the experience of past generations (tradition) as well as to advice and studies in the present, and they utilize their God-given talents in order to find the best possible path for their children.

For example, it is God's desire and

command that every individual utilize his God-given abilities and gifts (Ex 31:1-6; 35:30-35; 1 Pet 4:11). But how should parents put this into practice other than by utilizing their reason and by observing and learning from others how to find out which talents and preferences their children have and then encouraging, challenging, and accompanying their children in them?

I consider child-rearing to be an example of a certain authorization of the so-called 'natural law'—admittedly valid only in a relative and mitigated sense. With that said, child-rearing provides an authorized location for a natural ethic as well as for a manner of situational or experiential ethic.⁶ If the basic biblical mandate for child-rearing is accepted, parents will simply learn much from the 'nature' of things.

The growth and physical and spiritual development of a child provide many decisions to consider, leading parents to compare their children with others' children—even if this cannot be done completely. And many dimensions of child development can be accurately described by people who are not Christians, so that it is proper for Christian parents to take counsel from such people, even while we acknowledge that their descriptions of child development may be influenced by worldviews we do not accept.

The Old Testament book of Proverbs is an example of a large educa-

⁶ For a more detailed explanation, see Thomas Schirrmacher, *Leadership and Ethical Responsibility: The Three Aspects of Every Decision*, The WEA Global Issues Series, vol. 13, Bonn (Germany), 2013. Online: <http://www.bucer.org/resources/details/leadership-and-ethical-responsibility.html>

⁵ Frame, *Doctrine*, 40-49.

tional book in the Bible (e.g., Prov 4:1-9). It is not by chance that it draws from the wisdom of many cultures, not only from the earlier parts of the Bible or other Hebrew sources. Comprehensive education found there includes the ability to survive independently in everyday life. This is comprised of work, forethought, working for peace, and bringing about justice. Everything, however, leads back to this point of departure: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge ...' (Prov 1:7).

II Between the Spirit of the Age and Evangelical Pharisees
Are Christian child-rearing and ethics conservative or progressive? Christianity is very conservative when it comes to the preservation of God's creation ordinances, but it is very progressive and revolutionary when it comes to surmounting false traditions and unjust regulations which stand against God's Word, wrongly lay claim to be God's commands, and enslave people. A pure conservatism to appease the older generation is as foreign to the Bible as is change in order to satisfy the younger generation.

Christians should be neither automatically conservative nor automatically progressive but should attempt to pursue education and child-rearing from a biblical perspective. This means they should not try to overcome the spirit of our age with the spirit of a previous age and should not try to overcome the spirit of a previous age with the spirit of this age. Following Romans 12:2, they know that only the person who is ready and willing for constant growth through the renewal of the mind by means of continuing examina-

tion of the will of God is set free from the scheme of any age: 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.'

Justice in the godly sense in society has to be maintained at any cost; injustice has to be combated and eliminated, regardless of whether this is perceived to be conservative and outmoded or progressive and subversive. The biblical picture of lifelong monogamy is perceived in Germany today to be backward-looking and conservative, and in Saudi Arabia it can be charged that it would destroy an established thousand-year culture in a revolutionary way.

Whoever wants to practise Christian ethics based on the Bible today cannot let it be defined according to a pattern that is conservative or progressive, as one directed toward restoration or revolution, as one oriented toward the past or the future. Christian ethics cannot allow itself to be grist for the mill between today's millstones of the spirit of the age and the millstone of Evangelical Pharisees. To emphasize the point: Christians cannot conquer today's spirit of the age with yesterday's spirit of the age, nor *vice versa*!

We can take as an example the effects on education of the so called '1968' student revolt in Germany, along with similar events at that time in other western countries. Not everything prior to that time was good, but not everything before that time was bad. Conservative Christians tend to romanticize earlier times, and progressive Christians tend to demonize those same earlier times. However, if we

think in terms of the Bible we cannot allow ourselves to be pressed into such a mould. At those points where the 1968 student revolt toppled immoral authorities or brought about the collapse of bourgeois facades, Christians should be grateful. At those points where biblical values were destroyed, Christians should have regrets.

To be more specific, take the concrete example of anti-authoritarian education. Anti-authoritarian education was taken *ad absurdum* by some who were influenced by the ideas of '1968', but today it is rarely practised in a comprehensive manner. There are still many who give lip service to the ideology of the student revolt, but in the realities of family life, kindergartens, schools, and professional life, the values now promoted are the abilities to co-exist, to integrate, and to exercise self-discipline, lest one receive a bad evaluation. Because Christians believe in creation, in which God, the highest authority, established the state and parents as secondary authorities, they have never been able to straightforwardly endorse anti-authoritarian child-rearing and education. And Christians should not be surprised that social realities have led many to step back from fully implementing the ideas of '1968'.

However, does that automatically mean that what was previously practised as authoritarian child-rearing was entirely correct with nothing to improve? Was the penchant for draconian punishment and the use of force sometimes unbridled? Was parental authority sometimes viewed as unlimited, without judging whether it served the goal of the well-being and the growing self-responsibility of the

child? And were children all too often treated according to fixed formulas without taking their individual differences into account?

Besides the negative side effects, has it not also been a benefit of modern pedagogy that every child is seen as an individual and that education is to be adjusted to every child? Is it not also a benefit that we today treat children in a manner corresponding more to their age, specifically calibrating educational material according to their stage of development, and not just offering doctored-up, adult-oriented material?

Apart from that, one has to note that on the side of evangelicals, the word authority is used often. However, there are seldom explanations of what authority actually means when taken in the context of the Bible. In spite of a lack of good sources, Hans-Georg Wünch has analysed the concept of 'authority in the Christian school'⁷ as commonly seen in the current Christian school movements. Wünch has shown that evangelical schools, as they often call themselves, are shaped by modern anti-authoritarian pedagogy to a much larger degree than they are often aware. They have also achieved only very little in the way of justifying a biblical-theological sense of their understanding of Christian pedagogy and biblical authority.

Wünch surely differentiates between schools at this point, but that changes little in relationship to the overall result. Wünch shows how much can be said with the Bible as the *norma normans* as far as authority is con-

⁷ Hans-Georg Wünch, *Autorität in der christlichen Schule* (Bonn: VKW, 1995); (ET *Authority in the Christian School*).

cerned⁸ and how little of this has been developed and assimilated by Evangelical schools. Looking at this question more than 15 years later, there is nothing which has essentially changed with respect to this situation.

Paul makes it clear in two passages that child-rearing does not give parents *carte blanche*. Rather, authority is for the child's benefit, and will be measured against a future goal. Here are the two passages:

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4).

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged (Col 3:21).

How is it that so often in Christian circles there is talk of necessary obedience on the part of children, but so seldom mention of the warning against hard-hearted education which provokes children to rebellion (Eph 6:4) or takes away their courage to live (Col 3:21)?

Consideration for the well-being of the one to be educated is recognized in the Bible as the central motivation for education (Prov 3:12; 1 Thess 2:7-12).⁹ Child-rearing and education are not primarily about punishment. Rather, light punishments (in contrast with the punishments the state can impose) are permissible and appropriate only if they are embedded in what is essentially a loving relationship and are

avoidable by the parents' having set up sensible and understandable rules beforehand.

The necessity of correction and punishment is justified in many biblical texts by saying that the child has evil possibilities or malicious plans or is otherwise in some manner a threat to himself because of negative developments (e.g., Prov 20:30; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15). The teaching of original sin is of great significance for Christian pedagogy. If children are evil from the time they are small (Gen 8:21, Ps 51:5), and sin, as in Sodom and Israel, can be committed by 'young and old' and by 'the least to the greatest' (Gen 19:11; Jer 8:10), it is also appropriate to address the problem of evil inside a child.

However, it is too one-sided when Christian child-rearing emphasizes only this aspect, as correct as it might be. Authority never exists for its own sake. Rather, it is always given by God and is to be measured against the good for which God has given it. And is it not God the Creator who has made children so diverse and who has endowed them with the most various gifts and abilities?

Judeo-Christian anthropology (the understanding of human nature) exists in a certain tension. On the one hand, humankind is created as the image of God and endowed by God with unbelievable abilities and diversity. On the other hand, sinful humankind has turned from God and is capable of unbelievably evil thoughts and actions.¹⁰

⁸ Wünch, *Autorität in der christlichen Schule*, 186-255.

⁹ For details, see Thomas Schirrmacher, *Moderne Väter* (Holzgerlingen/Stuttgart: SCM Hänsler, 2009), 64-72.

¹⁰ This sinful or evil direction within human nature must be addressed both by limitation/restraint and by forgiveness/grace, both by law and by the gospel.

III Complementary Educational Goals

Corresponding to this two-sided understanding of human nature, there are two complementary sets of educational goals which, in our view, belong together, even though some have separated these goals. On the one hand, education and child rearing should develop the self-sufficiency and God-given potential of the individual; on the other hand, education should develop the integration and obedience of the individual into society, restraining sin. Christian instructional method should implement a thoroughgoing complementarity of principles.

Children, in both family and school, are viewed as images of God needing direction and encouragement so that the abilities they have been given by God can unfold and be fully utilized. These are abilities which are artistic and literary as well as interpersonal. Even a self-reliant personality under the Creator as the goal of child-rearing and education is not an end in itself. Rather, the limited goal of unfolding the talents of the individual has a further goal, not only responsibility for oneself but also for other people, as well as for the development of the created potential of society.¹¹

Children, in both family and school, are likewise seen as people who, owing to sin, no longer live according to their original God-given purpose and design. For that reason, they need to be trained away from evil. This includes limits and punishments as much as it

does counselling, assistance, and gracious pastoral care. Christianity is very self-critical, as well as very critical and mistrustful of sinful human nature. It assumes that parents and teachers as well as those entrusted to their care, not only allow themselves the occasional blunder now and then, but rather, in normal everyday life, every individual is characterized by egoism which injures the self and others.¹²

All too often, authoritarian child-rearing has lost sight of the fact that each child is a distinct and unique personality created by God and that the goal of every form of child-rearing is the healthy unfolding of abilities into independence as a member of a community. Authoritarian child-rearing has sometimes placed the holder of the office in an absolute position without measuring him against the purpose for which he received his authority. No wonder that without God man is ostensibly the final authority.

Authoritarian child-rearing assumes that if one has driven away or restrained evil, something good has been achieved. Authoritarian child-rearing too often became an end in itself, where the father had a right to be served after a strenuous day and obedience had value in itself. This is the only way to explain the fact that the army has been praised as the 'school of the nation', even with its oft brutalizing tendencies.

11 This part of our philosophy of education corresponds with the part of our political philosophy in which we emphasize human rights and human dignity.

12 This part of our educational philosophy corresponds with the part of our political philosophy where we talk about provisions for accountability for those who rule via a separation of powers so that even government officials can be indicted by another branch of government.

The 1968 generation built upon an opposite and extreme educational theory arising from belief in the good in humanity, thinking this goodness would develop on its own. All that had to be done was not to stand in its way and to get all authorities out of the way. Suddenly authority itself was perceived as evil, and setting limits no longer served to protect against what was wrong or to learn the good and the useful. Authority was described as something sinister. The old insight of experience had been lost, that whoever is raised in a loving, good, and intensive manner often becomes a more self-confident person with backbone, whereas little supervision in childhood can lead to unsure and easily manipulated adults.

Christian child-rearing and education should consciously build upon a set of significant complementarities: law and grace, encouragement and boundaries, self-sufficiency and leadership belong together. Whoever sees only the positive side as the scheme education should follow will be brutally overrun by evil in child-rearing (and likewise in school). Whoever sees only the negative side declares child-rearing and punishment to be ends in themselves and loses sight of the goal.

Christian educators in the family, school, and elsewhere have the opportunity to practise the balance and complementarity of encouragement and demands, of freedom and limits, of self-sufficiency and integration/submission, and of consolation and admonishment.

I am convinced that biblical complementarity is appealing for all people, whether Christians or not. We all know how unpleasant it is either to have au-

thorities who are bitterly hard or who never take a stand. We know we did not want parents who always said no or parents who always said yes. We know that our children expect real authority from us, as well as real personal love and support. We can love neither the harsh sergeant nor the dish rag. And, as a Christian, I am of the opinion that God created us in this way.

IV The Use of Reason

Our starting point has been the Bible, therefore faith, but we must also take up the role of reason. However, our discussion of faith and reason is not that of the secular world in which reason, often under the influence of a secular ideology, is seen as evaluating faith-based or Bible-based truth claims. Rather, our discussion of reason starts within the Bible. And in the New Testament a Christian is taught to be consciously and willingly a thinking individual.¹³ It is impossible to list all the terms and texts found in the New Testament in which thinking is described as indispensable for living out the life of faith. Christians know, discern, learn, teach, question, answer, ask for wisdom and prudence, understand, grasp, test, and declare.¹⁴

In the Old Testament, the God-fear-

¹³ For details, see Thomas Schirrmacher, *Wie erkenne ich den Willen Gottes* (Nürnberg: VTR, 2001), 15-134; Schirrmacher, *Leadership and Ethical Responsibility*, 21-29; John R. W. Stott, *Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life* (2nd edition, Wheaton: IVP, 2007).

¹⁴ Compare the good overview by Otto Michel, 'Vom Denkakt des Paulus', 211-213 in Michel, *Dienst am Wort: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986).

ing individual is a person who reflects on life, who does not thoughtlessly live for the moment. There is an emphasis on the use of reason before God. This is repeatedly emphasized in the book of Proverbs. For example when the topic of speaking is addressed: ‘The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil’ (Prov 15:28). Self-control, which both the Old and New Testaments extol, has to do with not following one’s impulses but first thinking and then acting. ‘A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps’ (Prov 14:15).

For that reason, Paul calls upon Christians, ‘Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults’ (1 Cor 14:20). Indeed, in the Bible it is a matter of submitting all thought to God in obedience (2 Cor 10:3-6). However, that does not mean that one thinks less. Rather, the fact is that one reflects more.

V Schools, the School System, and Home Schooling

European Pietistic Christians in centuries past, along with evangelical Christians worldwide, have always been involved in a wide variety of school systems. And they have given a significant impetus in the whole range of school systems. Committed Christians have always been active as teachers at state schools, while they have also repeatedly started new private schools using completely different approaches. They have also been active around the world in the home schooling movement for several different reasons. Even if these ways can be viewed as parallel paths

for Evangelicals around the world, indeed leading to intense discussion among themselves, there are still some common denominators of evangelical involvement:

1. The great significance of well-thought-out and comprehensive child-rearing, i.e., of immense commitment to the next generation.
2. The great significance which is attributed to self-sufficiency and religious freedom for the next generation operates on the assumption that a real Christian is an individual who can decide for oneself at a mature age.¹⁵ For that reason, there is no movement which emphasizes religious freedom as strongly as does Evangelicalism because it begins with one’s own children.
3. The considerable importance which is attributed to parental responsibility and which, in relation to the state, comprises an extended and controlling arm rather than any entity which stands over it.
4. A holistic view of child-rearing and education not divided into knowledge, character, and becoming self-reliant. Rather, Evangelical education includes all aspects of life.

VI Conservative Values Return

In the meantime, the ‘1968’ student up-

¹⁵ This is true and this is expressed in the teaching of adult baptism or in emphasizing the idea of confirmation introduced by Martin Bucer as the personal confirmation of a child’s baptism.

rising in Germany, which substantially contributed to the development of the first evangelical schools in Germany, is over and has been proved to have been on the wrong track, even though no one should say that very loudly, because many of the old '68 generation still hold the reins of power. Now many, even some not usually regarded as either Christian or conservative, are talking about the need for boundaries, values, rules, or discipline within education. Some of the examples are striking.

Focus (a major German weekly magazine) had the following on its cover page (8/2005): 'Verzogen oder erzogen? Kinder brauchen Grenzen,' translated, 'Spoiled or Educated? Children Need Boundaries'. However, no one is supposed to name the inappropriate values being rejected in order to re-establish boundaries. Nor should one name the culprits who undermined value-based boundaries and continue to call them in question.

Spiegel (also a major German news magazine), which, as one of the great promoters of the 1968 movement is certainly not above suspicion, has written about the current day school situation in a detailed article entitled 'Pfusch am Kind', translated 'Botching It with Children'.¹⁶ In the section called 'Auch Disziplin ist eine Schlüsselqualifikation', 'Discipline Is Also a Key Qualification', it included the following on the consequences of the 1968 movement as far as schools are concerned—on which it was certainly high-mindedly silent with respect to its

own complicity:

Many politicians involved in education have underestimated ... the force of the change in values which changed the school system in the wake of the student uprisings. Many an individual has not mustered the courage to learn self-critically from mistakes in the past and to make the overdue policy adjustments.... This attitude still characterizes many old leftists in the education system today, although school has radically changed in the meantime. Even the mildest punishment at school can only be enforced with difficulty, and similar to giving someone detention, these so-called social behaviour grades (for the form of behaviour during instruction) only have a scarcity value. Even stubborn truants—estimated to be 250,000 throughout Germany—remain largely undisturbed.

For this reason, the much 'cherished concept of an enemy' of long ago, the 'crammer school', with its 'teaching approach based on direct instruction', is something which the left has to 'urgently say goodbye to'. Hans-Peter Bartels, an SPD (Social Democratic Party) member of the German Bundestag, has called upon his colleagues to do the following: 'Thirty years of continual anti-authoritarian inspired reform have instead brought about the farthest reaching erosion of limits, de-formalization, and de-canonicalization within the practice of instruction in the school system. Therein, and not in the manner of the alleged authoritarian teacher, lies the problem nowadays.' ...

¹⁶ Jochen Bölsche, 'Pfusch am Kind,' *Der Spiegel* 20/2002, 96-116, here 104; also see 'Ende der Kuschelpädagogik' *Der Spiegel* Nr. 22/2002, 58-64.

There is now a heavy price to be paid for progressive pedagogues, for whom writing counted as something elitist, and from time to time only had little writing done and declared a written form of expression secondary in so-called minor subjects ...

World War II ended in 1945. The new constitutions of the German states and then finally the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany all contain the right to Christian private schools. And yet, for 25 years there was a type of paralysis in the school question across large sections of evangelical Christianity. It was not until the almost legendary 1968 uprising that a change came about. Scientists began to 'out themselves' (as it is now called) as adherents of creation. For the first time, private trans-denominational theological universities (e.g., the STH Basel, the FTH Giessen) and study centres (the Albrecht Bengel Haus, the Friedrich Hauss Study Centre, among others) emerged initially as alternatives or complements to state theological schools, and the weighty tradition of Christian educational theory returned to the scene.

That what began with the first schools on a biblical basis would become a movement with over 100 schools, for which *Focus* und *Die Welt* predict rosy times, was not suspected by anyone then. While at that time there was a struggle for each individual family, and while discussions in Christian churches became very emotional, nowadays the evangelical school movement, as well as the entire private school movement, is decidedly not limited by one thing: a lack of parental interest.

Finally, in Germany the first evan-

gelicals in the sphere of educational theory left their self-imposed ghetto at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s; their belief was put to the test in the middle of society and everyday life with their own schools. From the beginning, the schools were intensively used by non-evangelicals and non-Christian families, even though, strangely enough, the most frequent charge to be heard was that these schools were ghettos.

Nowadays many of these schools are so integrated into their cities and communities that the charge has become self-defeating. This is because only a tiny number of the schools are insider schools that serve only children from Christian families.

The evangelical school movement has contributed significantly to getting Christians out of the ghetto of their church circles. Belief is no longer an affair only within a believing church community when the devout are among themselves. Rather, it has to face the test in everyday life, taking positions on all the questions with which our society has to deal, continually answering before a critical public.

Christian schools have a long and largely beneficial history to exhibit around the world. Whether it is schools from the early days of Christianity, the schools of the Reformation, or missionary schools around the world, it has always been a matter of course for Christians everywhere to grant their children a good education and to offer this to those who believe differently as well.

VII Humanity in Educational Theory

A reason that Christians cannot simply leave the education and rearing of their children to the state, even if children go to a state school, is that every educational theory is determined by its notion of man and a related form of ethics. There is no pedagogical approach without an approach to ethics and without a worldview by which the respective educational theory orients itself. For that reason Eckhard Meinberg has written in his book, *Das Menschenbild der modernen Erziehungswissenschaft* (*The Conception of Humanity in Modern Educational Science*), 'about the indispensability of notions of man for mankind'.¹⁷

That behind every educational theory there is a form of ethics, a notion of humanity, indeed a religion and a worldview, does not apply only to such obvious examples as the 'educational theory of the Greens'. Rather, this is generally made clear, for example, in the study by Karl Dienst entitled 'Streams of Educational Theory: Worldview Positions and Notions of Man'.¹⁸ Siegfried Uhl has aptly noted:

Each of these views of humanity is simultaneously the 'hidden center' of a 'system of educational theory.' For this reason, the respective 'concept of humanity' is the appropri-

ate key for getting through to the details of the tenets of educational theories and to grasp them ... with respect to their inner required coherence.¹⁹

In other words, there is no value-free, neutral form of child-rearing. Every form of child-rearing is oriented toward a certain ethical ideal and rests upon a certain notion of who humanity is, so that rearing the child thus occurs in the direction of this notion of humanity. Christian child-rearing will always include the idea that Christian standards and the biblical notion of humanity form the foundation of the education of children.

Children are shaped not only by the actual curriculum, which prescribes the material to be conveyed. In addition to the official educational theory, the mere necessity of co-existence and cooperation in school has a shaping function educationally, in a positive or a negative sense. This is mostly overlooked, for which reason some speak about a 'second' or a 'secret' curriculum.²⁰

The second curriculum could be designated as the unofficial or even as the secret curriculum since it largely escapes the attention of school educators. This secret curriculum also reflects a happy medium: a basic course in social rules, regulations, and routines. Pupils as well as teachers have to appropri-

¹⁷ Section 1.1 in Eckhard Meinberg, *Das Menschenbild der modernen Erziehungswissenschaft* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 1-3.

¹⁸ Karl Dienst, 'Pädagogische Strömungen der Gegenwart: Weltanschauungspositionen und Menschenbilder', Information Nr. 70 (X/77), EZW, Stuttgart, 1977.

¹⁹ Siegfried Uhl, *Die Pädagogik der Grünen*, (München/Basel 1990, 46) using a quote by Otto Friedrich Bollnow.

²⁰ Compare in particular Jürgen Zinnecker (ed.), *Der heimliche Lehrplan: Untersuchungen zum Schulunterricht* (Weinheim/Basel, 1975).

ate this basic course if they want to make their way through the institution, which is the school, without incurring great loss.²¹

How does one solve problems? How does one respond when one is an outsider? How does one speak with people who represent other views? What is it that counts in order to be acknowledged by fellow classmates? What is truly important in life? How are boys and girls to get along with each other? These and many other questions are not covered in class. Rather, they are answered in the schoolyard.

At many schools, the question of how pupils are to get along with each other and how teachers and pupils are to get along with each other has long since no longer been answered by educational principles and high ideals. Rather, it is answered by the law of the jungle. With the increasing decay of Christian values in our society and the exceedingly limited room for manoeuvring on the part of teachers and pupils at state schools, it is often no longer possible to come to a positive relationship between teachers and pupils. Indeed, sometimes there cannot even be an orderly flow of instruction in the classroom. Teachers at state schools hardly have the opportunity to instruct their pupils when it comes to character and to exercise any influence on how pupils get along with each other beyond the hours of instruction.

²¹ Philip W. Jackson, 'Einübung in die bürokratische Gesellschaft: Zur Funktion der sozialen Verkehrsformen im Klassenzimmer', 19-34 in Zinnecker, *Lehrplan*, 29; also comp. John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992).

VIII Living the Christian Values

According to the Bible, being a role model is of great significance for whatever upbringing is involved. Parents are supposed to set an example for what they expect from their children. The elders of a church should live according to biblical requirements so that they have the authority to lead God's community (1 Pet 5:1-4). Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote the following about the church of the future:

One must not be allowed to underestimate the meaning of the human 'role model' (which has its origin in the humanity of Jesus and was so important in the case of Paul!); their words receive their emphasis and power not through concepts but rather through 'role modeling' ... This thought has almost completely escaped us!²²

From this it becomes clear just what a Christian school is. It is not simply a school which only Christians attend, or which is only under the ownership of Christians, or in which only 'born-again' teachers give instruction. In an impressive book, Jay Adams makes it clear that a Christian school is above all a school in which Christian content is conveyed, lived out by example, and practised.²³

²² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung* (München 1958³), 262.

²³ Jay E. Adams, *Back to the Blackboard: Design for a Biblical Christian School* (Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1982). This is more clearly defended for a Christian college by Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1987²).

Jan Amos Comenius and his 'Forging Place of Humanity'

Jan Hábl

I Modernity, Postmodernity and the Problem of Humanity

Humaneness is a precious commodity. It is more precious the more we are aware of its lack. Since the time of the Enlightenment people have believed that humaneness would follow the progress of knowledge, that the right *scientia* would secure the right *conscientia*; that is, the one who knows what is right will do what is right! Historical experience, however, has proven that human beings are more complicated than that.

There is no doubt that certain areas of human potential have made unprecedented progress. Technologies have provided extraordinary power and overabundance—especially to the western part of the world. On the other hand, our technocratic society faces gigantic ecological, economic, political, social, and other problems; millions of people are living in poverty on the edge of society, starving and lacking

foundational care. 'The technocratic optimism of the 50s and 60s is being re-evaluated today', observes Jarmila Skalková, who continues:

It appears that science and technology, as they have functioned in the resulting society, bring about a number of antihuman symptoms: objectification of human beings, one-sided development and neglect of spiritual needs. The key problematic motifs are the alienation of personality under the pressure of bureaucratic structures, and a mass consumerist culture.¹

In the same way, Zdenek Helus comments on our era from the sociological point of view, observing that it is a 'period of great disruption' in which

¹ J. Skalková, *Humanizace vzdělávání a výchovy jako současný pedagogický problem* [The Humanisation of Education as a Contemporary Pedagogical Problem] (Ústí nad Labem: UJEP, 1993), 46-47.

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we are disturbed by realities such as the conflict of civilizations, the potential for global self-destruction, uncontrollable demographic explosions, the decline of moral literacy, a dramatic decrease in social capital, political and religious extremism, and so on.² The moral aspect of the problem is underlined by statements such as the one by Gilles Lipovetsky: '[T]he 21st Century will either be ethical or it will not be at all.'³ Similarly Jan Sokol speaks about human beings as an 'endangered species'.⁴

There are some who still believe that the current crisis of humanity is merely temporal and provisional.⁵ It is expected to change soon as some new, technically better method is generated and implemented—whether political, economic, structural, educational or other. The optimistic spirit of modernity, however, is gradually yielding to postmodern scepticism. The new generation does not believe that any scientific, business, or economic, let alone

political, solution exists that would ensure a better existence than what their parents experienced.

The progress of humanity has been, for the postmodern individual, utterly lost in romantic illusions. Truth is an empty concept that means whatever anyone wants it to mean. Objective knowledge is irrelevant. Law and justice have been left to the mercy of interpretation (according to observations by professionals dealing with clinical behaviour disorder issues). Schools have become tools of indoctrination, for their so called 'preparation for life' is—deconstructed with post-modern hermeneutics—nothing but a functional moulding of individuals to be able to accept and play well their socially determined role, according to the agenda of modernity. (In this work, space will not allow me to deal with the specifics of modern and post-modern philosophy and culture, and many others have studied it in greater detail).

Is there any alternative? A meaningful understanding of humanity? A meaningful way of educating a human being that would help the individual to become truly human? Schools are often expected to play a significant role in developing 'authentic humanity', but what does it mean to be human in the first place? To answer these questions, I want to turn to the work of Jan Amos Comenius. Why Comenius, a pre-modern thinker of the 17th century?

His anthropology as well as his pedagogy offer something modern philosophy has lost. In contrast to the typical modern self-imposed restriction on metaphysics, Comenius's philosophy of education assumes it. In fact, he believes that a proper education is the key means of restoring humanity. De-

² Cf. Z. Helus, 'Culture of Education at the Beginning of the New Millennium, Current Educational Challenges' in S. Chocholová, M. Pánková, M. Steiner, eds., *Jan Amos Komenský. Odkaz kultury vzdělávání* [Jan Amos Comenius: the Cultural Legacy of Education] (Praha: Academia, 2009).

³ G. Lipovetsky, *Soumrak povinnosti. Bezočesná etika nových demokratických časů*. [Twilight of Obligation. A non-painful Ethics in New Democratic Times] (Praha: Prostor, 1999), 11.

⁴ J. Sokol, *Filosofická antropologie. Člověk jako osoba* [Philosophical Anthropology. Human being as Person] (Praha: Portál, 2002), 15.

⁵ Cf. A. Prázný, 'Komenský—myslitel krize' [Comenius—Crisis Thinker] in *Pedagogika* 3 (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Pedagogická fakulta, 2008), 236–240.

spite the antiquated language and pre-modern philosophical apparatus, his work brings fresh insights to the contemporary de-humanising situation.

II Biographical Context of Comenius's Work

Comenius was born on March 28, 1592 in Moravia. His family belonged to the Unitas Fratrum (Unity of Brethren), which was a branch of the Czech (and Moravian) Reformation movement begun in 1457. Inspired by the ideas of Petr Chelčický (1380–1460) and Jan Hus (1369–1415) the Unity strove for radical piety and a return to a Christ-like simplicity of life. It was their radicalism and separatism that caused much persecution of the Brethren from the beginning of their existence.

Their characteristic non-compromising desire for spiritual purity also included, in their early periods, a rejection of magisterial power, oath-taking and war. They also avoided worldly education and vocations such as commerce, which they considered a hindrance to a consistent following of the Lord. Due to their interaction with the Reformation ideas of the time, the community gradually developed into a Protestant denomination, standing theologically between Lutheranism and Calvinism.

Comenius's life was marked by a series of particularly difficult afflictions, which significantly shaped both his theology and his pedagogy. At the age of twelve (in 1604), Comenius lost his parents and two sisters, probably from the plague, and had to live with one of his other sisters and her family. When only thirteen years old Comenius experienced first-hand the destructiveness

of war. As a consequence of the religious conflict between the Hungarians (Calvinists) and the Habsburgs (Roman Catholics) he lost all his inherited possessions, as well as his guardian family.

His church community soon recognized his natural talent and sent him to Přerov Gymnasium—one of the best high schools in the country at the time. Later Comenius was sent to the reformed universities in Herborn and Heidelberg, where he encountered some of the most influential ideas of the time (Alstead's encyclopediasm, Piscator's irenism, Raticius's educational reforms, etc.). Two years after returning from his studies he was ordained as a minister, and his first pastoral appointment was to the church at Fulnek in Northern Moravia. By this time the Brethren theologians had determined there was no biblical reason for their pastors not to marry, so Comenius's young wife Magdalene accompanied him.

The beginning of the Thirty-Years War, in 1618, brought about another series of life afflictions for Comenius. His homeland was devastated by various troops of the Habsburg (Roman Catholic) armies. Being a cleric of the Protestant church, Comenius was forced to leave both his family and his community, and hide in various locations in Northern Moravia. By 1623 he had lost virtually everything: his house was destroyed, his congregation dispersed, his library was burned by the Jesuits, and his young wife, having just delivered their second child, died of the plague along with the two babies.

For the next five years Comenius led an insecure life, until the final expulsion of all Protestants from the coun-

try. The Brethren found refuge for a short while in Leszno, Poland. Comenius remarried, but his second wife also died, leaving him with four children. His third wife outlived him. In Leszno he became a co-rector of the Brethren's school and later bishop (the last one) of the denomination. It was during this period that most of his educational works were written.

Comenius's fruitful, 28-year-long Leszno period (1628-1656), was interrupted by three sojourns in other countries—where he was invited to work on educational reforms as his reputation as an outstanding educator spread across Europe. The first invitation came from England (1641-1642), the second from Sweden (1642-1648), and the third from (today's) Hungary (1650-1654). Comenius even received an invitation to work as rector of the newly founded Harvard College in America.

The Northern Wars in 1655 between the Protestant Swedish King, Charles X Gustav and the Roman Catholic Polish King, John II Casimir, proved to be fatal for Comenius and his denomination. The Leszno Brethren community naturally sided with Swedish party, which the Polish Catholic majority considered to be a betrayal of Poland. As soon as the city of Leszno was no longer protected by the Swedish troops the Polish partisans invaded it and burned it.

Comenius and his family barely escaped with their lives, lost all their property, and were forced into exile once again. Particularly painful for Comenius was the loss of certain manuscripts on which he had worked for more than 40 years. From Leszno he took refuge in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, where he died in 1670.

III School as the Workshop/ Forge of Humanity

Comenius's contribution to education is enormous. He attempted to write about two hundred books related to education. To outline his philosophy of education I will focus on three main areas that represent the most significant contributions: 1) his revolutionary approach to language learning and teaching; 2) his emphasis on wholeness and universality in education, and 3) the concept of following nature in education.

1. Language teaching/learning

Comenius himself was surprised by the international fame which was brought about by the publication of his Latin textbook *Janua linguarum reserata* (*The Gate of Tongues Unlocked*) in 1633. He quickly accompanied it with two additional language textbooks: *Vestibulum*—for the elementary level, and *Atrium*—for the advanced.

The fame of these textbooks was so great that it soon reached the royal courts; Drouphin the Great, son of Ludwig XIV, and Kristina Augusta, the Swedish Queen, for instance, learned Latin from them. Amazingly, even Jesuits, whose pedagogical approaches were so antagonistic to Comenius's pedagogical universalism, could not deny the effectiveness of his method and used his *Janua* in their schools.

To understand its success, it is necessary to know that the language teaching methodology of Comenius's time relied mainly on rote memorization and repetition. Boys were forced to recite long pieces of classical antique writings, for example, without any understanding of the sounds they were

uttering; the meaning was ‘locked’ to them. The process was long, painful and often completely unsuccessful, the learners simply never grasped the foreign language. Comenius’s lament in the *Great Didactics* shows the point: ‘it is men we are preparing, not parrots.’⁶

In contrast to that spiritless recitation, Comenius’s method was based on the *pansophic* idea of an encyclopaedic organization of material and the interconnection of real things, sense experience, and words. The key principles can be summarized in several maxims:

- foreign languages ought to be learnt through the mother tongue;
- the ideas ought to be obtained through objects rather than words;
- proceed from the familiar to the unfamiliar;
- phasing and progression of teaching must be appropriate to the learner’s development;
- the learner ought to be equipped with a universal compendium of knowledge, that is knowledge of all important aspects of his world (physical, social, religious, moral, etc.);
- make the learning process a pleasure by the proper choice of learning matter, and also by the proper (nonviolent) methodological treatment of the matter.

⁶ J. A. Comenius, *Didaktika magna* (Great Didactics), M. W. Keating, Trans, (<https://archive.org/details/cu31924031053709/>, 1967) chap. XXII, par. 3. Original work published 1657. The majority of the remainder of citations from the *Great Didactics* come from chapters XXIII and XXIV, and will not be further referenced.

The *Janua* was followed by a series of other textbooks which made language learning even more user-friendly. Perhaps the most famous is *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (The Visible World in Pictures), the first illustrated language textbook.

M. W. Keating (translator of *The Great Didactics*) comments on Comenius’s language-learning revolution by saying that he ‘rescued the boys of his generation from the sterile study of words and introduced them to the world of mechanics, politics, and morality’. Similarly, Daniel Murphy praises his approach: ‘Seldom in the history of language teaching has it been so closely related to the personal and social environment of the learner as it was in these new texts, which probably explains their survival more than three centuries after their creation...’⁷

Interestingly, Comenius gradually became frustrated by the side effects of the fame. He kept receiving invitations from various countries asking him to help with didactic reforms, but he saw his calling elsewhere. He sought after greater goals: not merely the reformation of schools and learning methods, but the restoration of all human affairs.

2. Holistic approach to education

The notion of ‘wholeness’ or ‘universality’ is an integral part of Comenius’s *pansophic* approach to education. He often expressed it in the motto, ‘*omnes, omnia, omneno*’, which means that all people ought to learn, in all possible

⁷ D. Murphy, *Comenius: A Critical Reassessment of his Life and Work* (Portland, OR: Irish Academy Press, 1995), 195.

ways, all things.

Let us consider *omnia* first. When saying ‘all things’ Comenius recognizes that ‘a perfect knowledge of all sciences and arts ... is neither useful nor possible for any human being’. Wholeness in this context means the learning of ‘the foundations, reasons, and goals of all the important things’, which enables human beings to ‘fulfill the essence’ that is given them by God.⁸

In the *Czech Didactics*, Comenius elaborates on this theme, and relates the content of education to the previously set goals:

- the goal of rationality refers to the knowledge of created beings (that which is);
- the goal of virtuousness refers to the knowledge of morality (that which ought to be);
- the goal of godliness refers to the knowledge of God’s grace (that which is to be enjoyed).

These three areas of knowledge then constitute the content of education, which enables humans to understand why they were brought to life: to serve God, other creatures, and themselves.⁹

When saying *omneno*, that is teaching/learning by ‘all possible ways,’ Comenius refers to the noetic as well as methodological aspect of education. He often expresses it in the triad *theoria/praxis/chrésis* (wise use), pointing to the fact that knowledge without virtue

and piety is never complete, for knowledge—as well as anything else—might be both used and abused. A person who is well *informed*, but not morally *formed* is merely a ‘useless encumbrance on the earth’, according to Comenius, even a ‘misery’ — to oneself as well as to others. For the greater the knowledge, the worse it is when it’s used for evil.

Therefore Comenius contended that an educated but immoral humanity goes backwards rather than forwards, degenerating. On the other hand, his ‘forging-place of humanity’ deliberately aims for regeneration, that is, for the restoration of every dimension of humanity — reason, character, and spirit.

The idea that morality as well as piety is both teachable and learnable might be surprising to a contemporary educator (and not only to Christian educators). After all, is not authentic piety (together with morality) a direct result of God’s saving grace? What was implicit in the early *Didactics* is made explicit in the later *Pampaedia*.

Here Comenius presents his argument for the necessity of leading students towards morality and courtesy, and the following paragraph—dealing with ‘instilling piety’—begins with the words: ‘For it is evident ... that also piety is teachable...’ He further recognizes that regeneration is the necessary starting point given by the grace of God. But grace does not ‘abolish’ nature; on the contrary, grace ‘restores’ and ‘perfects’ it, argues Comenius.

Therefore, it is legitimate to use natural instruments when leading towards morality and piety. And to Comenius it is evident that nature teaches that morality and piety will be best instilled by:

- Providing a good and living ex-

⁸ Cf. J. A. Comenius, ‘Pampaedia’ in *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských* [General Consultation Concerning the Improvement of Human Affairs] III (Praha: Svoboda, 1992), 1-12.

⁹ J. A. Comenius, *Didaktika česká* [Czech Didactic], 4th ed. (Praha: Národní knihiskárná I. L. Kober), 1926, chap. X.

ample to children, for imitation is one of the key elements of human learning.

- Providing an adequate explanation of every rule or principle that is to be obeyed, for it is good for human action to know and understand why we do what we do.
- Providing an opportunity for everyday practice, because morality and piety are not only a matter of knowing, but also of doing.

Notice that in both paragraphs (on morality and on piety), Comenius follows the same threefold structure of instruction: example, understanding, practice. The whole process must never be 'violent' or 'coarse'; on the contrary, it must be 'gentle', 'free' and 'smooth'. For that is the way God himself relates to people; he brings no one to himself violently, against his or her will.¹⁰

In Comenius's conceptualization, *omnes* refers to all people indeed. Education for everyone was a revolutionary idea in his time, and Comenius, being aware of it, anticipated his opponents' objections:

Someone might say: For what [purpose] should workmen, peasants, porters, or even women be educated? My answer is: If this general education is properly instituted, everyone will have enough appropriate material for thinking, desiring, exertion, and acting. Secondly, eve-

ryone will know how to conduct all the behaviours and longings of life without crossing the enclosures one has to pass through. Moreover, even in the midst of labour, all people will be lifted through meditation on the words and deeds of God. ... In brief, they will learn to see God everywhere, to praise him for everything, to embrace him always, and thus live better in this life of sorrows.

Elsewhere Comenius adds to his theological argument other material, which seems to be based simply on the educator's experience: 'if a human being is to become a human being, he or she needs to be educated toward humanity'. Without proper education, he or she becomes 'the most wild of all creatures'. Therefore, it is necessary to educate all people, whether smart or dull, rich or poor, boys or girls, rulers or serfs.

The need for the inclusion of all people into the 'project' of the restoration of human affairs, Comenius sees reflected also in the mutual interdependence of each individual unit of humankind—whether a person, a city or a nation. 'We are all together on one big theatre stage of the world, and everything that happens here touches us all', states Comenius figuratively in one of his late writings.¹¹

The value of this idea cannot be overestimated, for the recognition of the fact that the harmony of the individual cannot be attained without the harmony of the whole has enormous

¹⁰ This thought comes from J. A. Comenius, 'Mundus spiritualis', in *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských* [General Consultation concerning the Improvement of Human Affairs] vol III (Praha: Svoboda, 1992), chap. VII, par. 2.

¹¹ *Unnum neccesarium*. Taken from A. Molnár and N. Rejchrtová, *J. A. Komenský o sobě* [J. A. Comenius About Himself] (Praha: Odeon, 1987), 294.

implications for every aspect of human life.

To accomplish his holistic goals Comenius designed a complex system of schools based on both horizontal unity in respect to curricula at a given educational level, and vertical unity in the hierarchy of the stages of education. In the *Great Didactic* he distinguishes four major developmental stages of youth and proposes four types of schools: the nursery school—up to the age of six; the ‘comprehensive’ or basic school—from age six to twelve; the grammar or secondary (Latin) school—to end at age eighteen; Academia from eighteen to twenty four. In *Pampaedia* he later adds four more stages with the explanation that the whole of life provides opportunities for conscious learning: the school of youth; the school of maturity; the school of old age; the school of dying.

However obscure the ‘school of dying’ may sound, Comenius explains that it is the greatest sign of wisdom to ‘prepare for meeting with the Creator’. Any time before the old age one ‘could’ die, but when reaching the old age one knows he or she ‘must’ die. This fact provides a good educational opportunity to ‘turn away from the ephemeral and adhere to the eternal’.¹² In a time when education had neither stable institutions nor general programs of study, such a systematic and complex proposal was quite unique.

3. Educating according to nature

Comenius was the first person to formulate the idea of ‘education according to nature’. However, his education

was very different from the popular approaches of later thinkers such as Rousseau, because his understanding of nature (both that of the world and of the human being) was different. Comenius presents the foundations of his anthropology and cosmology in his early *Didactics*. Here he explains that:

Human beings are ‘the greatest, strangest, and most glorious of all creation’.

Human beings are the *greatest*, because only humans possess all the attributes of being: life, senses, and reason. For example, a stone has being but does not possess life; plants and trees are given life, and even the ability to multiply, but do not sense things; all the animals, beasts, birds, fish, reptiles, etc. possess life and the senses but not reason.

Human beings are the *strangest* of all creatures, for only in them ‘is the heavenly merged with the earthly; the visible with the invisible, the mortal with the immortal. To embed a rational, immortal, and eternal soul into a piece of clay and make it to be one personality, that is a mighty act of God’s wisdom and artistry.’ It was only the human being to whom God related personally (*nexus hypostaticus*) and thus united his nature with human nature.

The greatest *glory* of human beings lies in the fact that God himself in Jesus Christ became a human being in order to ‘recreate what has been corrupted’. No other creature in the whole universe has been so gloriously honoured by the Creator.

The ultimate goal of human life is not in this life. This is made known to people in the Scriptures, but it is also observable in human nature and life.

The composition of our nature

shows that what we have in our lives is never sufficient. For human beings have a threefold life in themselves: vegetative, in common with plants; animal, in common with beasts; and spiritual or intellectual, which is specific for people. From the fact that we tend to grow and develop toward perfection on all these levels, though we reach perfection on none of these levels, Comenius concludes that 'there must be something greater cherished for us'.

All our actions and our affections in this life show that we do not attain our ultimate end here.

Everything that happens with us in this life happens on levels, onto which we ascend higher and on which we always see yet higher levels.... Similarly, our efforts are first smallish, thin, and feeble, but gradually they grow greater and reach further. But as long as we are alive ... we always have something to do, something to desire, and something to strive for. Nevertheless, we can never fully satisfy or fulfil our efforts in this life.

Earthly life is but a preparation for eternal life. Comenius sees the evidence of this in three things:

Human beings. 'If we examine ourselves, we see that our faculties grow in such a manner that what goes before paves the way for what comes after. For example, our first life is in our mother's womb. But for the sake of what does it exist? Of the life itself? Not at all. ... In the same way, this life on earth is nothing but a preparation for eternity.'

The world. 'When we observe the world from any point of view, we can see it has been created for the purpose

of the multiplication, edification, and education of humankind.... This world is but a seedbed, nourishment, and school, from which we are to proceed to the eternal academy.'

The Scripture. 'Although reason shows it, the Holy Scripture affirms most powerfully that God, having created the world and everything in it, made man and woman a steward of it and commanded him and her to multiply and to replenish the earth and subdue it. Hence the world is here for man and woman. God speaks about this clearly in Hosea, that the heavens are for the earth, the earth then for corn, wine, oil, etc., and those things are for people (Hos 2:21,22). All things, therefore, are for humans, even time itself... . After all, the Scripture speaks about this world almost always as preparation and training, a way, a journey, a gate, an expectation; and we are called pilgrims, visitors, arrivers, and expectant ones.'

The ultimate goal of every human being is 'eternal happiness with God'. To reach this, a human being needs to fulfil his or her human vocation, which Comenius derives from the Scriptures, specifically from the account of the creation of human beings (Gen 1:26). There are, according to Comenius, three main tasks given to people as a life assignment:

To be a rational being, which means 'to be an observer of all things, the one who names all things, and the one who learns all things. In other words, humans are to know, to call, and to understand all the known things of the world.'

To be a master of all creation. This consists in 'subjecting everything to his own use by contriving that its legit-

imate end be suitably fulfilled; in conducting himself royally, that is, gravely and righteously...' In other words, to govern the creation requires first of all to govern virtuously one's own 'movements and actions, external and internal...'.¹

To be the image of God. That is, 'to constantly turn one's heart, desires, and efforts toward God, both externally and internally... and thus reflect the perfection which lies in human origin'.

In the following chapter, Comenius further explicates the three tasks in order to show they are rooted in human nature. Human nature has a 'natural' tendency toward *learning*, *virtue*, and *piety*. In the explanation, Comenius makes clear that by nature he understands 'not the corruption which has laid hold of all men since the Fall, but our first and original condition, to which, as to a starting-point, we must be recalled'.

To support his view, he quotes Ludwig Vives, a recognized authority of the time, along with Seneca. Vives says: 'What else is a Christian, but a man restored to his own nature?' This is remarkably similar to Seneca: 'That is wisdom, to return to nature and to the position from which universal error has driven us'. To strengthen his argument, Comenius relates naturalness with the doctrine of common grace (*universalis providentia Dei*). The sign of God's wisdom, which secures the continual functioning of everything, is that:

he does not do anything in vain, that is, without a specific goal, nor without the specific means needed for achieving the goal. Whatever is, is for some purpose, and in order to reach the goal, it is furnished with the necessary instruments,

even with some kind of impetus, that make things flow to their goals not against their nature, but rather spontaneously and gently.

It is similar with the human being, according to Comenius, who 'is naturally fitted for the understanding of facts, for existence in harmony with the moral law, and above all things for the love of God'. Comenius acknowledges several paragraphs later that the 'natural desire for God, as the highest good, has been corrupted by the Fall and has gone astray, so that no man, of his strength alone, could return to the right way', but God has his instruments of 'Word and Spirit' by which he 'illuminates' his own.

Therefore, 'while we are seeking for the remedies of corruption, let none cast corruption in our teeth', states Comenius anticipating an objection, and continues:

Did not God, soon after the Fall, and after the exile ... sow in our hearts the seeds of fresh grace by the promise of his blessed offspring?

4. The implications demonstrated

The implications of Comenius' philosophy (anthropology) for education might be well observed in his specific (didactic) instructions for moral education and so called 'instilling piety'. Morality as such is dealt with in his *Mundus moralis* – 6th grade of Pansofia, and partial notes can be found in many of his works (*School of infancy*, *Via lucis*, etc.), but the educational aspects of morality are most thoroughly treated in his *Didactics* (both Great and Czech, briefly also in *Analytical didactics*).

In addition to little notes spread throughout the *Didactics*, Comenius devoted an entire chapter (XXIII in both books) to the question and named it '*Methodus morum in specie*', which M. W. Keating translates into English as 'The method of morals'. The next chapter (XXIV) is called *Methodus pietatis* ('The method of instilling piety'); the fact that it follows the moral instruction chapter is no coincidence, as we shall see.

Comenius begins the preface to these two chapters by explaining that everything he had written to that point was only the 'preparation' or 'beginning' and not the main work. It is necessary to emphasize here that in the previous twenty two chapters he dealt with nothing less than the entire system of pedagogical goals, principles and methodology for the teaching of 'science, art and language'. But the main work, according to Comenius, is the 'study of wisdom, which elevates us and makes us steadfast and noble-minded – the study to which we have given the name of morality and of piety, and by means by which we are exalted above all creatures, and draw nigh to God himself'.

These three purposes of the study of wisdom correspond to the triad of fundamental pedagogical goals mentioned above. Let me briefly remind the reader: at the very beginning of *Didactic* Comenius states that the teleological demand for knowledge, morals and godliness arises from an *a priori* anthropological nature, which means that to humankind it has been given to be knowledgeable of things, to have power over things and himself, and to turn to God, the source of everything.

All three areas belong inseparably

together and would be 'unhallowed' if they were separated. 'For what is literary skill without virtue?' Comenius floats this rhetorical question and immediately answers it with a reference to the old proverb:

He who makes progress in knowledge but not in morality ... retreats rather than advances. And thus what Solomon said about the beautiful but foolish woman holds good for the learned man who possesses no virtue: *As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman who is without discretion.*¹³

Hence an education that was not held together with morality and the 'firm bond' of piety, would be a 'miserable' education. A good education would instead develop humanity in all three of the above-mentioned dimensions. For 'the whole excellence (*essence*, in the *Czech Didactics*) of man', Comenius explains in chapter IV, is situated in these three things,

for they alone are the foundation of the present and of the future life. All other things (health, strength, beauty, riches, honour, friendship, good-fortune, long life) are as nothing, if God grant them to any, but extrinsic ornaments of life, and if a man greedily gape after them, engross himself in their pursuit, occupy and overwhelm himself with them to the neglect of those more important matters, then they become 'superfluous vanities and harmful obstructions'.

The proper aims of moral education in Comenius's *Didactics* are the

13 Comenius, *Didaktika česká*, chap. X, 17.

so-called 'key' or cardinal virtues of 'wisdom, moderation, courage and justice' (*prudentia, temperantia, fortitudo, iustitia*), without which the structure of pedagogy would be 'unfounded'. Comenius first briefly clarifies the individual virtue, and subsequently posits the method of its acquisition; together, these then form the crux of his methodology of character formation. He identifies six principles in the *Czech Didactics*, and later in the *Great Didactics* supplements and expands them to ten. For the sake of clarity I will only briefly summarize them here:

- Virtue is cultivated by actions, not by talk. For man is given life 'to spend it in communication with people and in action'. Without virtuous actions man isn't anything more than a meaningless burden on the earth.
- Virtue is in part gained by interactions with virtuous people. An example is the education Alexander received from Aristotle.
- Virtuous conduct is cultivated by active perseverance. A properly gentle and constant occupation of the spirit and body turns into diligence, so that idleness becomes unbearable for such a man.
- At the heart of every virtue is service to others. Inherent in fallen human nature is enormous self-love, which has the effect that 'everyone wants most of the attention'. Thus it is necessary to carefully instil the understanding that 'we are not born only for ourselves, but for God and our neighbour'.
- Cultivation of the virtues must begin at the earliest age, before 'ill manners and vice begin to nest'.
- Honour is learned by virtuous action. As he learns to 'walk by walking, to speak by speaking, to read by reading' etc., so a man learns 'to obey by obedience, forbearance by delays, veracity by speaking truth' and so on.
- Virtue is learned by example. 'For children are like monkeys: everything they see, whether good or bad, they immediately want to imitate, even when they're told not to, and thus they learn to imitate before they learn how to learn.' Therefore they need 'living examples' as instructors.
- Virtue is also learned by instruction, which has to accompany example. Instructing means clarifying the meaning of the given rule of moral behaviour, so as to understand why they should do it, what they should do, and why they should do it that way.
- It is necessary to protect children from bad people and influences. Inasmuch as a child's mind is easily infected, it is necessary on the one hand to retreat from 'evil society' and on the other hand to avoid lazy people.
- Virtue requires discipline. Inasmuch as fallen human nature reveals itself to be constantly 'here and there', it is necessary to systematically discipline it.

It is worth mentioning that Comenius is aware of the principle that a young age is well fitting for any kind of education or formation. In chapter VII, paragraph 4, he speaks almost like a developmental psychologist:

'It is the nature of everything that

comes into being, that while tender, it is easily *bent* and *formed* (emphasis mine). ... It is evident that the same holds good with man himself', continues Comenius in the following paragraph, and infers: 'If piety is to take root in any man's heart, it must be engrafted while he is still young; if we wish anyone to be virtuous, we must train (chisel, *otesat* in the *Czech Didactics*) him in early youth; if we wish him to make great progress in wisdom, we must direct his faculties towards it in infancy...'

The inter-relationship of morality and piety can hardly be overlooked. It is evident throughout the book, but in chapter XXIII and XXIV Comenius makes it explicit. To stress his point, he accompanies the chapter on moral education with a brief chapter dealing with 'instilling piety'. Here he acknowledges that piety is a special 'gift of God', but adds that God uses also the 'natural agencies' of his grace and he therefore wants parents, teachers and ministers to be his 'assistants', which reveals something about his understanding of the doctrine of *common grace*. This, then, leads to the conclusion that piety ought to be an integral part of family education as well as school education.

Comenius repeats that by piety is meant the ability to 'seek God everywhere, ... to follow him everywhere ... and to enjoy him always' and explains that the first happens through reason, the second through will, and the third through the joy of knowing him. There are three sources of piety given to people: God's word, the world, and human beings (*Scriptura, natura, providentia particularis*); we are to read, observe and meditate carefully in order to draw

from them.

The growth in piety takes place through *contemplation, prayer* and *trials*, which make a believer to be a 'true Christian'. But piety must not be merely 'a matter of words', explains Comenius, but must be based on a 'living faith' which is authenticated by adequate deeds. Similarly, in *Mundus moralis* Comenius says that one of the key aspects of proper moral wisdom (*prudentia*) is pursuance, for 'to know what ought to be done is not as difficult as doing it'.¹⁴

Since one of the key sources of piety is the Scripture, Comenius presents a strong case for its role in education (in chapter XXV). Rather than using pagan books (antique classics) in schools, he encourages using the Scriptures and argues for its superiority. That does not mean he would reject the classics as such, but he is concerned about the primary influence to which a youth is to be exposed.

There is much wisdom in the pagan literature consistent with the Scriptures, which might be collected and used, which Comenius frequently does in all his writings. But at the same time there is much 'immorality,' 'godlessness' and 'blindness', which only a trained spirit can distinguish, and which is therefore not suitable for a youth.

Some of Comenius's statements concerning the classics such as Ovid, Lucianus, Diogenes and Aristotle led some interpreters to the conclusion that he was an 'enemy of the antique' as such. That however is a very artificial reading of Comenius, for through-

¹⁴ Comenius, *Mundus moralis*, chap. II, 5.

out all his work there are virtually hundreds of quotations from the classics used as validations of his arguments.

The same attitude can be observed also in Comenius's late *Věječka umudrosti* (Fan of Wisdom), where in paragraph 38 he shows in contemporary examples how pagan literature turned a number of people, including the Swedish queen Christina, away from the truth.

The inter-relation of pedagogy, anthropology, theology and cosmology in Comenius's thinking shows that he pursued high philosophical goals. It was a conscious and serious endeavour which in his later works he called *pansophy*, a special notion of universal wisdom. Assuming the universe is a harmonic unity created by one Creator, Comenius saw a fundamental parallelism between the cosmos (nature), the microcosmos (human nature), and revelation (Scripture). Bringing human nature into harmony with nature and Scripture is the real essence of education. It is the 'art' (*ars*) of 'forging' such humanity in which the '*nexus hypostaticus*' (the personal relationship) to God is restored.

IV A Model for Today

It is evident that Comenius's anthropology, as well as his overall philosophy of education, is thoroughly grounded—both metaphysically and theologically. Comenius takes for granted that a human being was not made 'only for himself, but for God and his fellow man'. Likewise, human nature is not defined (even by an excellent observer) empirically, but theologically: man is the most perfect and excellent of all creation because he was made in the image

of God, but he is also a sinner because he has denied that image.

Out of this arises the need for education—human nature is broken and cannot by its own efforts become good; on the contrary, it has a tendency 'to become obstructed by empty, fruitless and vile things'. Comenius's education is thus *educatio* in the original sense of the word: *e-ducare*, a leading out of, or away from, the hindrances of one's sinful self.¹⁵ Without any exaggeration, for Comenius education plays a soteriological role: it is a God-given means for the salvation of mankind.

Such assumptions and goals are understandably foreign to the point of view of secular modernity. Therefore most of the modern (especially Czech) Comeniological research has been affected by the secular tenets of modernity, and has had a tendency to ignore those assumptions and goals as merely a 'residual of his time' or as a theoretical 'wasteland' without much sense.¹⁶

There were of course notable exceptions like Jan Patočka, Jan B. Čapek, Dagmar Čapková and Radim Palouš, who opposed the Marxist ideology and strove to understand Comenius in his thought integrity, but the mainstream of Communist Comeniology did its best to 'save' Comenius from the metaphysical and medieval 'slush' (*bahno*).¹⁷

¹⁵ Cf. R. Paluoš's notion of *educatio* in *Čas výchovy* [Time of Education], (Praha: SPN, 1991), 63ff, and A. Wright, *Religion, Education and Post-modernity* (Routledge Flamer, 2004), 130-131.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Popelová, *Komenského cesta k všeňápravě* [Comenius's Way to Universal Reform], (Praha: SPN, 1958), 143.

¹⁷ Cf. F. R. Tichý, 'S J. A. Komenským do budování socialistické školy' [Building the

Comenius has been linked for example with social reformers and revolutionaries such as John Lilburne the Leveller, John Bellers the Quaker, and Robert Owen the Socialist.

Thus the Communist prism prevented the interpreters from appreciating Comenius's work in its fullness. Jan Patočka, for example, bravely stated (in 1957! that is, during one of the most difficult periods under the totalitarian regime) that the Communist interpreters, such as Otakar Chlup, Robert Alt and Archbishop Alexejovič Krasnovskij, 'emphasize Comenius's relationship to Bacon's inductive realism and assume that this relationship affects his education. However, they usually do not provide sufficient warrant for their theses, but simply affirm that Comenius belongs to the materialistic and sensualistic traditions.'¹⁸

Socialist School with J. A. Comenius] in *Jan Amos Komenský, Didaktické spisy* (Praha: SPN, 1951), 9.

18 J. Patočka, 'Cusanus a Komenský,' [Cusanus and Comenius] in *Komeniologické studie I.* (Praha: Oikoymenh, 1997) 168, and J. Patočka, 'Komenského duchovní biografie' [Comenius's Spiritual Biography], in *Komeniologické studie*

Similarly, as early as 1966 John Sadler identified the reductionist problems of the Communist interpretation: '[Comenius's] educational methodology is seen as an expression of his educational philosophy and as something which could be detached without great loss from its religious framework.'¹⁹ What is interesting (and somewhat frustrating) is the fact that this interpretation still prevails in Czech schools today, as I have witnessed in my own experience as a university professor of education.

However, I believe that the crisis of the modern paradigm (especially its secular version) that we have witnessed for some time opens up new interpretational horizons in relation to pre-modern intellectual concepts. Not everything that is old is necessarily obsolete. Comenius's concept of education is indisputably old and non-modern, but in the context of the current state of 'modern' humanity the question must be raised as to whether this isn't its greatest strength.

III (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2003), 18.

19 J. E. Sadler, *J.A. Comenius and the Concept of Universal Education* (London, 1966), 35.

Proposal for a Theological Prolegomena of Education

Lessons from Herman Bavinck's Legacy

Hanniel Strebel

I The Need for a Theological Prolegomena for Education

Let us imagine Christian parents accompanying their child while he is growing up. They have a vital interest in how they can develop his gifts to secure him a place within the professional world. Loyal caring Christian parents spend their energy and money on a proper education. They can expose the child to different influences and the child can come in contact with different worldviews. The dogma of pluralism, according to which all religious beliefs and value terms have equal standing, stays at the forefront. The child meets other children following various religions such as Islam, Judaism and Buddhism.

In our western countries, children are predominantly influenced by a secular outlook, which sets their own needs at the centre of their life. God does probably exist, but he has nothing to do with their every-day life. So how can parents guide their children and what can they do to help them navigate their way through this diversity of beliefs?

Alternatively, take a young adult who has his compulsory school years behind him. He enters the university, where he meets with several inter-related competing goals: on the one hand, he is persuaded that he has to secure the best possible chance in professional life, and definitely the highest possible income. Secondly, it is made clear to him by fellow students that the time has come in which enjoying life is the top priority. He is invited to indulge in a party lifestyle. This raises the question: What is a proper goal that he should pursue?

Let us continue imaging a primary school teacher in front of a class of—let us say—25 pupils. Concepts and methods are subject to constant change. He still feels that in the end teaching is a human encounter. How should he deal with recent findings in brain research? How will he respond to the child-oriented approaches in education? What helps him to start from a biblical image of man in his daily lessons?

Fourth, let us put ourselves in the position of a university lecturer of

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English literature. During his studies and his PhD, lecturers and fellow students consistently work under the assumption of social constructivism. For discussion and interpretation of texts, this approach is applied comprehensively, and the assumption is that all judgments are only socially constructed, and are defined and controlled by their own frame of reference. Which way should he follow in the midst of this relativistic environment?

This essay is an elaboration from the work of the Dutch Neo-Calvinist thinker Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) to answer these fundamental questions. A balanced approach to education is equally aware of the why, the who and the how of education. The threefold structure of this essay is derived from his basic work on education. In his *Principles of Education*¹ Bavinck follows three concerns: namely to clarify the aim of education (teleology), to identify the nature of man (anthropology) and to evaluate certain concepts (methodology).

Before working out these three key issues we will have a look at Bavinck's historical context.

II Bavinck's Historical and Intellectual Background

We first have to ask why Bavinck is relevant for today's educational context. As a Dutch theologian, professor of dogmatics, author and public speaker, national church leader and Senate dep-

uty, he is regarded as one of the leading Dutch Reformed thinkers.² In recent years, his *opus magnum*, the four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics*,³ has been translated and published in various languages. While Herman Bavinck has experienced a (limited) renaissance in the US, he is still little known in the German-speaking world where I live.⁴

Bavinck experienced profound societal, religious and political upheavals during his lifetime. Shaped by the spiritual revival in the Netherlands in the early 19th century, which had been adopted especially within intellectual circles, he grew up in a denomination which in 1834 had separated from an increasingly theologically liberal Dutch Reformed Church (Hervormde Kerk). He witnessed the rise of the Christian Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP). He was a member of the committee which completed the merger with another spin-off from the Reformed state church in 1892.

Bavinck himself was trained at the theologically liberal university in Leiden. He spent 20 years of his productive lifetime as a professor and rector of his church's seminary in rural Kampen and another 20 years working at the Free University in Amsterdam, which was founded in 1881 by Abraham Kuyper, his famous mentor and friend. Within that urban cosmopolitan

² Recently an English biography has been released: Ron Gleason, *Herman Bavinck. Pastor, Churchman, Statesman, and Theologian* (Philipsburg: P & R, 2010).

³ Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1-4, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003-2008).

⁴ A German translation of his *Reformed Dogmatics* is in preparation.

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Paedagogische beginselen* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1904): The purpose of education (24-53); the starting point of education (54-92); the method of education (93-176).

environment he addressed many current philosophical, psychological and educational issues.

Bavinck was familiar with philosophy since the time of Immanuel Kant and especially the theology, philosophy and psychology of the 19th century. He extensively read Darwin and Haeckel, the leading propagators of evolution, as well as the dark thinker, Friedrich Nietzsche. He lived through the exuberant, optimistic mood at the dawn of the 20th century as well as the sobering First World War. Bavinck was an eyewitness of the industrialization of cities as well as of the establishment of the state school system.

Bavinck's commitment to education has to be seen against the background of the Dutch school dispute (*schoolstrijd*) which lasted for more than 100 years.⁵ The confessional Reformed who united with the Catholic private school movement in the 1870s fought a successful battle for the equality of private institutions. They finally achieved legal recognition and equivalent tuition in 1920.

We can locate four reasons for Bavinck's present-day relevance:

- A deep understanding of the western history of ideas as well as the Christian theological framework
- His 40-years involvement in National Higher Education
- His expertise on national and

⁵ Bavinck describes his view of the intellectual and social development of his country in the article, 'Mental and social forces of the Netherlands', *A General View of the Netherlands*, Number XVII (1915). <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/hb/mrsf/mrsf.html2013>. Accessed May 15, 2013.

international educational polity (which meant questions such as establishing educational structures in Islamic Indonesia)

- His first-hand experience of the complex building process of a modern democratic civil society

Bavinck wrote several books on the topic of education beside *Principles of Education* (1904). His *Biblical and Religious Psychology*⁶ (1920) contains a collection of essays in which he intended to address especially Christian teachers. His longer book, *The Education of the Adolescent* (1916),⁷ contains a brief history of education. In his shorter writing, 'The New Education' (1917),⁸ he dealt with the question of how the educational landscape should be designed after the war. His Dutch biographer Bremmer says that Bavinck's most fruitful work of his last years was in the field of education;⁹ Hepp, another biographer, even talks about the lifelong 'love of his heart'.¹⁰

We are now ready to plunge into four questions for a Theological Prolegomena of Education, beginning with a definition of 'education' and of 'world-view'.

⁶ Herman Bavinck, *Bijbelsche en religieuze psychologie* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1920).

⁷ Herman Bavinck, *De opvoeding der rijpere jeugd* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1916).

⁸ Herman Bavinck, *De nieuwe opvoeding* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1917).

⁹ R.H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1966), 258.

¹⁰ Valentijn Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1921), 315, 322.

III Education and Worldview

1. Education

Bavinck sees the task of education (*opvoeding*) as a comprehensive one.¹¹ Man is born within a community as a helpless being. As a unity of body and soul, he must be provided for in both areas.¹² Education in the narrow sense includes the carrying and dragging of man from immaturity towards independence. This is done primarily by the small circle of the family and secondarily by the school. In the family it is unplanned, intuitive, but at school it is realized according to a plan. Bavinck distinguishes between education (*opvoeding*) as a generic term for the development process, and instruction (*onderwijs*) as the formal, structured part. Instruction is thus a part of the overall education and therefore subsidiary.

Bavinck also talks about an extended concept of education. The whole of life is designed as a process of orientation as well as rebuke. Education is therefore a ‘conscious, purposeful, systematic process of life’ that includes correction, orientation and shaping of the individual.¹³ The aim of this whole process is to be equipped for the work of God (2 Tim 3:17). Personality is continually shaped through a person’s thoughts and actions. This development aims at the perfection of man in

the image of God and thus the realization of his God-given potential.

2. Worldview

Education and worldview are deeply intertwined in Bavinck’s thought.¹⁴ Bavinck discerned three major actors, namely God, man and cosmos. All worldviews move among these three poles. ‘GOD, THE WORLD, AND MAN are the three realities with which all science and all philosophy occupy themselves.’¹⁵

This means that every worldview is forced to define the relationship among these three poles and to justify itself if one dimension is excluded.

(A)s every worldview moves between the three poles of God, the world, and man, and seeks to determine their reciprocal relations, it follows that in principle only three types of worldview are distinguishable—the theistic (religious, theological), the naturalistic (either in its pantheistic or materialistic form) and the humanistic.¹⁶

Bavinck derived several regularities from the interaction between God, world and cosmos:

- Access to God, to man and to the world is established through a single channel, namely our perception.

¹¹ See Herman Bavinck, *Paedagogische beginselen*, 14-17.

¹² In the Dutch language ‘voeding’ and ‘opvoeding’, nutrition and education, are linguistically related.

¹³ Cornelius Jaarsma, *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1935), 128.

¹⁴ During the last decades, the term has suffered under an inflationary use. I decided to use ‘worldview’ but to define first what it meant for Bavinck a century ago.

¹⁵ See especially Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation* (Amazon Digital Services, 2012).

¹⁶ Bavinck, *Philosophy*, pos. 444-447. (pos. is short for ‘position numbers’).

- The relationship with God affects all the remaining relationships among people and between people and cosmos.
- Since the fall man flees from God. In this way he also loses contact with his neighbour, which he needs.
- Escape and alienation result from sin. Bavinck distinguishes sins against one's self, against one's fellow man and against God.
- Unity can be restored only by God. The place where we belong is in right relationship with God and all creatures.

If we exclude God, we can either focus on man or on cosmos. Humanism focuses on humanity and sees itself in God's place. Materialism focuses on the cosmos, defining atoms as ultimate elements of the universe. Everyone has such a framework of thought, whether consciously or unconsciously. This overall framework of beliefs has a principal influence on every philosophy of education.

Bavinck draws a direct connection from his book, *Christian Worldview*,¹⁷ to his theoretical work, *Principles of Education*,¹⁸ both published in 1904. Education for him is neither purely empirical nor purely historical, but a normative, teleological, constructive science. Rooted in the realm of ideas, it also appears in reality. Education is determined in its essence by religion and ethics. It is not purely speculative, but

uses inductive and deductive methods to align perception and thinking. Biology, physiology and psychology, from Bavinck's perspective, are indispensable auxiliary sciences for education.

In the study of Bavinck's biography and context, we find that a major concern of his work was to apply the Christian worldview to all areas of life. Education can be seen as the first common theme of the confessional movement in the Netherlands from the mid-19th century, triggered by a revised legislation.

Bavinck was committed to provide teachers and parents within the Reformed private school movement with the main ideas of current educational philosophies. These were largely attributed to the evolutionary worldview by 'gurus' such as John Dewey (1859-1952) who emphasised pragmatism. This was mingled with humanistic thought through the rising movement called 'Progressive Education' that put the child at the centre of education.¹⁹

IV The Why of Education: Reclaiming a God-centred Teleology

1. Bavinck's teleological focus

Because every creature owes its origin to the creator, we can find his destiny only therein. Romans 11:36 functions as Bavinck's theological key: Everything comes from God, is sustained by him and therefore created for him.²⁰

¹⁷ Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1904).

¹⁸ Herman Bavinck, *Paedagogische beginstelen*, see the foreword.

¹⁹ Ellen Key's programmatic book, 'Das Jahrhundert des Kindes' was published in 1900. See Bavinck, *Paedagogische*, 40.

²⁰ See for example Herman Bavinck, *Our*

God's glory is the ultimate purpose, and thus the starting point for Bavinck's entire *oeuvre*. Anyone who does not read his work with the theocentric 'glasses' misses the main point. God is the highest good of his creatures. Because they were created through him, they are always—consciously or unconsciously—searching for him. As religious beings we must, if we turn away from God, align our aspirations to a God-substitute.

Bavinck stands with his teleology on the shoulders of Augustine and Calvin, to both of whom he explicitly refers. Augustine thought and wrote in the deep awareness that only in God's light do we see the light (Ps 36:9).²¹ In Calvin's words, the whole of life is played out before God (*coram Deo*).²²

What Bavinck particularly claimed for religion, he also expands to the entirety of science. No area of life can live without God's revelation. This is the main thesis of his famous Stone Lectures, *The Philosophy of Revelation* (1908). What he writes with regard to the Dutch poet Willem Bilderdijk comes out of the heart of his own conviction.

Bilderdijk 'sees everything *sub specie aeternitatis*, from the perspective of God. Everywhere he takes measure of

Reasonable Faith (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 17, 568. Bavinck begins and ends his comprehensive systematic theological study with the notion of Romans 11:36.

21 For Bavinck's assessment of Augustine see Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 1: Prolegomena*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 136, 139.

22 Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Calvin: A Lecture on the Occasion of his 400th Birthday, July 10, 1509—1909, *The Bavinck Review* 1 (2010), 69.

God's word and law and applies it to all phenomena and events. Not a philosophical principle, not an abstract idea of God, but the God of revelation is the starting point of his life and thought.²³

This approach stands contrary to that of human perspective. Theocentric thinking had been progressively lost during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Enlightenment taught people that they are intellectually and morally independent of God. This emancipation is nevertheless contrary to the Christian worldview. God's sovereignty claim must not be limited to a sub-area of life. Human autonomy is also in contradiction to reality, as Bavinck proves in his short work on ethics. We are not bound only to natural laws, but moreover to countless human regulations and conventions.

The evolutionary worldview reduces everything to reliance exclusively on matter. All existence and events are coincidental. Humanity thereby loses meaning and *raison d'être*. From this point it is only a small conceptual step towards utilitarianism, according to which we deliver ourselves to our own criterion of usefulness.

What Bavinck derived for the individual, he equally developed for the entire course of history. History is the ongoing design and unfolding of God's plan (Eph 1:10), not an endless and aimless succession of events. History is a coherent drama.

If both the individual person and the entire creation are geared towards their Creator, this must also be true for human learning. Although Bavinck

23 Herman Bavinck, *Bilderdijk als denker en dichter* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1906), 44.

does not despise empirical research (on the contrary, he encouraged empirical studies), he refuted the derivation of higher rules from pure observation as an impossibility. Education is a normative, teleological science because it always makes assumptions about the origin and purpose of humanity.

The contemporary pedagogy, Bavinck wrote in the heyday of 'Progressive Education', saw man as the sole standard and purpose of education. But where man takes the place of God, he commits idolatry and shifts the order established by God. This affects all relationships in the learning processes as well as the selection and presentation of contents. Because learning never takes place in a vacuum, there is no neutrality in education. Everyone who cuts through our bond to God commits violence against human nature. Bavinck therefore sees religious education as the core content, around which the other disciplines are grouped peripherally.

Bavinck's worldview is reflected in its historical teleology as well as in his philosophy of education. It is not we who set the standard for ourselves, but God's revelation is the standard and ideal. Deviations from God's created reality bring confusion and ambiguity. We must rely on a substitute for God, usually on ourselves. This is based on the false assumption that we are his own creators and developers. Current daily influences often lead to methodological changes, which lead to uncertainty among all participants in the learning process.

2. A God-centred education in a secularized state

This brings us to the question: How can a God-centred education be implemented in a country that has been secularized? This question can be answered only by defining the relationship between religion and culture. This was one of the fundamental questions with which Bavinck wrestled throughout his whole life.

During the Middle Ages the church had dominated the field of education, whereas in the 19th century the state had gradually been taking over that role. To clarify this complex relationship it is necessary to understand Bavinck's central motif of nature and grace. The question is nicely summarized in his work, *'The Sacrifice of Praise'*:

The great question therefore, which always and everywhere returns, is this: In what relation does grace place itself to nature. Practically every child of man must regulate that relation for himself in his thoughts and life, in his will and actions. And in a larger field it also continually makes its appearance, in church and state, in family and society, in science and education.

What is the relation between the creation and recreation, of the kingdoms of the earth and the Kingdom of Heaven, of humanity and Christianity, of that which is from below and that which is from above? All in accordance with his own personal peculiarity or characteristics every man will designate this relation differently and will also apply it differently in his life.

It makes a great difference whether

we think of grace as a doctrine or as life; whether we consider it as a supernatural addition to nature or as a remedy against the sickness of sin; whether it is designated for the heart and closet only, or for the whole rich and full life of man; whether it only serves to save the soul or has the tendency to prepare honor for God out of all His works.

On account of this difference there arises amongst believers — even amongst members of one and the same church, all manner of smaller and greater differences in the confession. The truth, to be sure, is one but it reflects itself in the consciousness of man in very different ways.²⁴

Bavinck's answer in a nutshell reads like this: He defined the relationship between religion and culture in accordance with Trinitarian salvation history. The same triune God who had created this universe also accomplished its recovery that became necessary through the fall. Grace and nature should not be separated.

Disturbances in the original order are due to sin. Salvation does not destroy or avoid nature, but rather intends its renewal. Accordingly, the fall has not brought about any material change. To recover the fallen creation God set the work of grace in motion.²⁵

Throughout the history of the Christian church this unity of nature and grace was abandoned and replaced by a quantitative instead of a qualitative contrast. The Reformation revised this view, claiming again a purely ethical antithesis between nature and sin. Bavinck saw himself and his time as a God-given opportunity to complete this work that had begun centuries earlier. For the individual Christian this primarily meant the faithful performance of his earthly vocation. On the collective level it meant that areas of life such as education had to be redefined and reinstalled from a God-centred perspective.²⁶

Bavinck's personal ideal lies within a confessional private school movement. State, school, church, family and youth organizations should cooperate with regard to the local conditions. For children from Christian homes, Bavinck emphasizes a unified view of the world, which is likewise transmitted through the family, the church and the school.

Bavinck was concerned about the ongoing secularization of society in general and school in particular. In his time both the liberal and socialist movements aimed to separate religion and education completely. As part of the confessional Reformed movement, Bavinck saw not only the church but also home, school, society and the

²⁴ Herman Bavinck, *The Sacrifice of Praise* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1922), 71-72. A comprehensive study is Jan Veenhof, translated by A. M. Wolters, *Nature and Grace in Herman Bavinck*, (Sioux City: Dort College Press, 2006).

²⁵ This is Bavinck's short definition: 'The essence of the Christian religion consists in the reality that the creation of the Father, ruined by sin, is restored in the death of the

Son of God and re-created by the grace of the Holy Spirit into a kingdom of God.' Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatism Vol. 1: Prolegomena*, 61.

²⁶ A good overview is given in Herman Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Christian Church', *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992), 220-251.

state (!) under the rule of Christian principles.²⁷

Bavinck positioned religion at the centre of education. Wherever Christian faith is banished from life, the soul is impoverished. A huge area of the inner life then remains unexplored. He expected this development to corrode the foundations of any society in the long-term.

V The Who of Education: Reclaiming a Re-Balanced Anthropology

The Bible sets people in the place where they belong. Where is that? The Bible teaches two complementary things: First, we are created in the image of God. At the same time we are fallen. In this respect we and our environment fit together: We live as fallen creatures in a fallen world. Sin is therefore a relevant dimension for education.

Bavinck remains balanced. He sees humanity as fallen creation, but he also emphasizes our dignity as created in God's image. This justifies even speaking of the 'majesty' of the child who is heir to the covenant of eternal life. There is no other book that assigns to the child such a high place as the Bible.

1. Created in God's image

Bavinck's magnificent description reads like this:

27 In this respect, it is interesting to read his early essay on the Kingdom of God (1881) that is based on a lecture for the Kampen seminary. Herman Bavinck (Trans by Nelson D. Kloosterman), 'The Kingdom of God, The Highest Good', *The Bavinck Review* 2 (2011), see especially 155-156.

(M)an forms a unity of the material and spiritual world, a mirror of the universe, a connecting link, compendium, the epitome of all of nature, a microcosm, and, precisely on that account, also the image and likeness of God, his son and heir, a micro-divine-being (*mikrotheos*).

He is the prophet who explains God and proclaims his excellencies; he is the priest who consecrates himself with all that is created to God as a holy offering; he is the king who guides and governs all things in justice and rectitude.²⁸

Let us briefly ask what insights can be derived from such a picture of biblical anthropology. What does it mean to be the 'image of God'?

- The Christian faith alone provides the relevant justification for the value of people. We have no value in ourselves, but only with respect to the Creator.
- There is congruence between us and the cosmos. They are made for each other.
- As a whole we embody the image of God. 'In our treatment of the doctrine of the image of God, then, we must highlight, in accordance with Scripture and the Reformed confession, the idea that a human being does not *bear* or *have* the image of God but that he or she *is* the image of God. As a human being a man is the son, the likeness, or offspring of God (Gen 1:26; 9:6; Lu 3:38; Acts

28 Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 2: God and Creation*, 562.

17:28; 1 Cor 11:7; James 3:9).²⁹

- The whole human race forms a unity with a single origin. This is manifested in the fact that the same basic conditions apply to all universal laws, for example, in mathematics and logic, but also in ethics. There exist common internal ideas.
- We are inseparable unities of body and soul, which together form our personalities. Our bodies are not prisons, but an integral part of us.

To subdue the earth is the God-given mandate for humanity as the unfolding of God's image.

- Every person has been equipped with different potentials and talents. These have already been distributed unequally at birth.
- Scripture emphasizes both the value of individuality and of community without playing one against the other. Learning happens in and through the community and at the same time in an individual, unique way.

Without this biblical framework we always distort certain aspects. 'If a person lacks an objective norm in his thought, for example, in the Holy Scriptures, then he constructs the world and God according to his own image.'³⁰

2. Fallen humanity

What changed³¹ after the fall? Since the Bible sees humanity principally in relationship to God, it takes a salvation-historical stand. The Bible looks at our creation in the image of God, his disfigurement by sin, our restoration through God's grace and our completion in the *eschaton*.

Generations of parents and teachers during Bavinck's lifetime (and today) started with other presuppositions. They took the 'best in the child' and did not reckon with sin anymore.

Thousands upon thousands of people exist who believe in the total natural goodness of humanity, who proceed from it in the upbringing of children, and who build their optimistic future expectations upon it.³²

Bavinck describes our condition as distorted in every faculty and function. We are no longer capable of exercising our threefold office, namely to serve as a prophet, priest and king. What are the consequences thereof?

- Sin is universal, for there is no one who does not sin. Sin is present from birth and relates to all of Adam's descendants.
- Especially relevant for education is the inclusion of intellect, will and affections.
- (Sin) begins with the darkening of the understanding, continues with the excitement of the imagi-

29 Bavinck, Bolt, Vriend, *God and Creation*, 554.

30 Herman Bavinck, 'Primacy of the Intellect or the Will', Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Science, Society and Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 201.

31 For a systematic treating of the doctrine of sin, see Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 23-190.

32 Bavinck, Bolt, Vriend, *Sin and Salvation*, 87-88.

nation, stimulates desire in the heart, and culminates in an act of the will.³³

- Even though reason and will can sometimes depress desire and lust, these are in their turn often subdued and put into the service of lust. ... Not seldom they let themselves be carried along by lust to such an extent that we are robbed of all independence and becomes slaves of our passions. The evil thoughts and the evil desires come up out of the heart and then proceed to darken understanding and pollute the will.³⁴
- The environment affects humans but is not ultimately responsible for his genuine development. On the one hand, we are the products of our parents and ancestors, our environment and upbringing. On the other hand, we are independent and responsible.
- The effect of sin can be very different under the same conditions, but in varying characters.
- There are countless variations, but only one source of sin. The severity of sin may vary.
- Sin intensified the existing differ-

entiation between potentials and inequalities.

Based on a shifting anthropology initiated by men like John Locke (1632-1704) and especially Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the idea was spread that we originated perfectly from the Creator's hands, degenerating through our own hands. Applied to education, this led to the theory that the child by nature was good and innocent. Education should aim to keep the child as far as possible away from bad influences. This explanation has stubbornly persisted.

It led to the false assumption that sin is dependent on the organization of society.

Finally, there are also those who cast the blame for all sin and misery on the lousy organization of society, and within that society, especially on capitalism.³⁵

In the modern era, as the notion of sin is slipping away, the culpability for every misery is being sought outside the person and located in the institutions, in social circumstances, in the organization of the state.³⁶

That means that external change improves learning conditions. That is partly true.

Culture can surely contribute some improvement in terms of outward forms and social circumstances, and Christianity has also played a significant role in that; but human nature remains constant, its capaci-

³³ Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 224.

³⁴ Bavinck, *Reasonable*, 238. In the history of Western thought there were three alternative justifications for sin: 1. The source of all moral evil is a lack of knowledge. 2. Sin is an act committed by free will which bring forth sin. 3. Sin belongs substantially to human nature. The three theories attempt to explain the sin originating out of the spirit, the will or the affections. However, the Bible sees all three human abilities involved.

³⁵ Herman Bavinck, *The Christian Family* (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2012), pos. 2209.

³⁶ Bavinck, *Family*, pos. 1403-1404.

ties and powers constantly hover near average, and from the human heart constantly proceed the same evil thoughts and imaginations.³⁷

Wherein lies the *utopia*? ‘They all suffer from the illusion that by means of external measures, by means of abolishing old laws or implementing new laws, they can change human nature or convert the wicked human heart.’³⁸

Sin was thus banished from the textbooks of pedagogy. In this way the topic disappeared from the conscious experience of educators. In Bavinck’s time, this led to the absurd situation that Christian teachers agreed with the church’s confession, but never talked about sin within their professional activities.

VI The How of Education: Reclaiming a Confident Access to Reality

Bavinck saw himself confronted with two epistemological schools: with *idealism*, which emphasizes the subject of knowledge, and with *empiricism*, which attaches importance to the object of knowledge. Empiricism tends to deny the spirit while idealism tends to devalue the body. Bavinck assessed overarching ideas and norms as indispensable (emphasized by idealism), but not at the expense of sensory perception (emphasized by empiricism).³⁹

The first foundation for Bavinck was *divine revelation*, which precedes all human knowledge. As he writes, God, is the Creator and Sustainer of all things; also, his thinking and knowing is antecedent to the existence of things. It is not the case that God knows the world because and after it exists, but the world exists because God thought it and called it into being by an act of his will.⁴⁰

Self-awareness is further the starting point for human perception.

In the final analysis it is in self-consciousness that we find the ineradicable conviction of the reality of the world within us and without us, of the actual and the ideal, of spirit and matter, of the seen and the unseen. These concepts constitute part of our nature and lie at the root of all our thought and action.⁴¹

A third pillar for Bavinck’s epistemology is the informal, *intuitive perception of the external world* and confidence in the reliability of the information obtained. In everyday life we tacitly assume that what takes up our eyes and ears does not deceive us.

There also is a *correspondence* between the outside world and the inner being of people. The reason for this is the divine Logos who created both the entire cosmos and the individual. Humanity and the world are created by the Creator to correspond with each other. This means that people are dependent

³⁷ Bavinck, *Family*, pos. 1847-1849.

³⁸ Bavinck, *Family*, pos. 1205-1206.

³⁹ For a comparison see Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 1: Prolegomena*, 217-222; Herman Bavinck, Jack Vanden Bort (trans.), *Herman Bavinck’s Foundations of Psychology* (Grand

Rapids: Calvin College, 1981), 67-69.

⁴⁰ Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2: God and Creation*, 69.

⁴¹ Cornelius Jaarsma, *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck*, 49-50.

on the external reality in every respect.

Human beings are in every respect dependent on the world outside of them. In no area are we autonomous; we live by what is given, i.e., by grace. But, reciprocally, we are made and designed for that whole world outside of us and connected to it by a whole spectrum of relations.⁴²

Beside that, there exists *a-priori knowledge* in each person that is outside its own created categories.

Finally, human knowledge is *limited but reliable*. We are God's creation; he is not ours. While our knowledge of him is accommodated and limited, it is no less real, true and trustworthy.⁴³

Bavinck's epistemology was heavily criticized. Bremmer criticised him for leaning too heavily on Neo-thomistic Theology, Aristotle and the Platonic doctrine of ideas.⁴⁴ The second and third generation of Neo-Calvinists after Bavinck saw him as an advocate of a synthesis-theology which mixes Christian and pagan-Greek elements.⁴⁵ Cornelius van Til, a self-declared enthusiastic follower of Bavinck, wrote: 'Perhaps the weakest point in the argument of Bavinck lies in his failure to

distinguish clearly the Christian basis of the certainty of human knowledge from the non-Christian.'⁴⁶

Nevertheless, Bavinck provides a solid Christian epistemology which helps to reorientate our minds in the midst of wide spread scepticism. How does that scepticism work out? All of our life and how we perceive it is ultimately the product of our own ideas. That means that everyone's picture of reality fundamentally differs, because it is designed by himself. In a radical form of epistemological scepticism, a common human concept of reality is denied, by the claim that there is no independent perception of facts.

More common is a milder form of this belief system which reads: Any belief is the product of its environment and inextricably bound up with it. That is, beliefs are necessarily and exclusively bound to a context of time and place and therefore relative. Especially popular is this so called 'social constructivism' in disciplines such as education, sociology and psychology. Bavinck's critical-realist epistemology re-introduces God as the creator of an objective reality.

VII Conclusion

A balanced approach to education takes into consideration the why, the who and the how of learning. There is a rich heritage that comes from Herman Bavinck's broad intellectual and public life throughout the 19th and early 20th century. Not everything is applicable today. While he was living at the outset

⁴² Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1: *Prolegomena*, 501.

⁴³ Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2: *God and Creation*, 96.

⁴⁴ See R.H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1961), see for example 182, 188, 196.

⁴⁵ See Albert M. Wolters, Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality, *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, ed. H. Hart, J. van der Hoeven and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Toronto: UPA, 1983), 113-131.

⁴⁶ Cornelius van Til, ed. William Edgar, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2007), 95.

of modernity, we are facing the consequences of some decades called ‘late modernity’ (say, postmodernism).

This means that Herman Bavinck will not offer accurate answers to all our questions.⁴⁷ But he helps us to orient ourselves in the midst of the contemporary intellectual ‘fog’ which has captured current philosophy of education, especially in the field of teleology, anthropology and epistemology.

1. Worldview

Parents are God’s first chosen teachers in worldview training! Unfortunately, a lot of Christians are separating faith and learning completely. Faith proceeds within the heart and is a private thing. Learning takes place in public.

This view is one result of the intellectual history of the last centuries. To protect the faith from attack and the decomposition of science, it has been removed from the public discourse. Bavinck would object: God is not only Lord over the realm of faith, but also of learning. This does not mean that Christians do not recognize that $2 + 2 = 4$ or would have completely different learning strategies. But they consider each topic through the ‘spectacles’ of faith.

Knowledge building is a means, but not the goal of learning. Faith is related to the entire formative life of the child (and the parents as well). It

will help us to correct our motives and goals (compare 2 Tim 3:15-17).

In summary, thoughts and actions are to be changed so that they honour God. God-fearing parents make it a habit, for example, to review a child’s homework not only in form and content, but also ideologically. They pray constantly to establish good links between the material imparted and the Christian worldview.

2. Teleology

Bavinck reminds us that creation and history are made with a view toward the glory of their Creator. The end of all things lies not immanently in things *per se* but is assigned to a transcendent purpose. Each person is part of an overall plan. We are always subliminally aware of this arrangement. We come to peace only when we find rest in our creator through reconciliation with him and start to deliberately live for him.

In this respect, Bavinck follows Augustine’s footsteps, and we should too. To accept God’s sovereignty, not only in theology but in every sphere of science and life, is adequate for us. I agree with Jaarsma who summarized this aspect nicely: ‘The main objective of Bavinck in his efforts in behalf of education was the defense of a philosophy of education which finds its center, as does his entire philosophy, in the Absolute Personal Being.’⁴⁸

Each learning process takes place between three actors, namely between God, humanity and the rest of creation. Some years ago I showed this model to my former supervisor. I will never

⁴⁷ Our differing political situation—a completely secularized state—requires an alternative approach for a vanishingly small Christian minority. Otherwise there is the danger of a grotesque contradiction between ‘theocratic rhetoric’ and ‘pluralistic reality’. See John Bolt, *A Free Church, a Holy Nation* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 2001), 339-348.

⁴⁸ Cornelius Jaarsma, *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck*, 131.

forget his reaction. ‘Please erase God from the model and replace it by “customer”.’ In that moment, I realized how deeply the belief that God has nothing to do with our everyday life, has taken root in our thoughts and actions.

We have banished God from our learning activities. But God cannot be eliminated, he has to be replaced. It makes me sad when I think that even Christians apply this ‘functional atheism’ in large parts of their professional lives. If the student understands that he lives for the glory of God, he will spend his study time differently. He will regard these important years not just as a license for a reckless life.

3. Anthropology

The consideration of the two aspects of reality, our creation in the image of God and our sinful condition, brings a healthy anthropological balance: on the one hand, there are gifts and powers of human nature which are due to the remaining image of God in fallen humanity, whereas on the other hand, sin expands continually and pours out in a stream of misdeeds over all the earth as well as in the lives of individuals.

Instead of blaming one specific agent (for example, the teachers or the parents) and thereby building up blame-relationships, we are asked to reconsider the individual situation. That means we have to evaluate the existing potential and to train will and affections by the formation of good habits as well as by sanctions. Besides that, it forbids us to excuse everything, which is a tendency of humanistic psychology. It protects us also from an overly optimistic perspective on learn-

ing processes which offers great potential for disappointment and a constant wavering between optimism and pessimism.

Finally, our sinful condition should lead us to the cross, where our real salvation comes from. Thanks to the new life we are able to live with our primary duties. That is, in Bavinck’s and the Reformer’s words, to act as prophet, priest and king.

A Christian school teacher is well aware that both he and his students are affected by sin. Sin is therefore part of his everyday reality. If it does not exist conceptually, it has to be reinterpreted. Our teacher could easily blame his pupils or the parents. He can despair and despise the gifts that God has entrusted to him. The downside to this is the pride if he masters everything with flying colours. A third possibility is to make the environment (schoolhouse, superiors, education system) responsible for his failure. A grain of truth lies in these allegations! Our people and our environment are actually affected by sin. But we can never excuse ourselves.

4. Epistemology

The epistemological scepticism with which Bavinck was confronted and which led to a lifelong struggle has its contemporary equivalent. It emerges under the umbrella term of ‘constructivism’ and represents the programmatic doubt of our age. The perception of an objective, real external world is seriously questioned. When the subject-/object distinction is completely cancelled, we act solely within our experienced reality.

This form of scepticism seems to

have captured various streams of today's philosophy of education. Even in this current form the 'I' remains the last reliable bastion. One could speak of an Archimedean point, which has retained its claim since Descartes: the human mind is the first principle by which one becomes a receiver of God's revelation. Bavinck reverses the order and puts the creature in the place where we belong—in every respect dependent on the revelation of God. This message from Bavinck is highly relevant.

That means that our young univer-

sity lecturer thoroughly deals with the Christian worldview. He should over time—like Bavinck—consider the material he teaches with the eyes of faith. This functions as an internal corrective to the ideological currents within his field. It strengthens his faith that God is Lord of the entire reality of his students as well. English literature can become a study of common human hopes and fears. The Christian faith stands up to reality. This confidence extends the known way and gives room to new questions and approaches.

PATERNOSTER BIBLICAL MONOGRAPHS

Joy in Luke-Acts. The Intersection of Rhetoric, Narrative, and Emotion

David H. Wenkel

The Gospel of Luke has been called the 'gospel of joy', and the joy theme has also been recognized in Acts. This theme, though, has received relatively little attention in NT scholarship. *Joy in Luke-Acts* examines the joy theme from a socio-rhetorical vantage point, showing that the joy theme empowers the Lukan rhetoric of reversal. The theme is a primary method in which the narrator seeks to persuade the reader to enter into the values and beliefs that characterize the 'upside-down' world in which YHWH has visited his people in Jesus.

'David Wenkel succeeds wonderfully and lucidly in his attempt to unpack the place of joy within the narrative fabric of Luke-Acts as a whole and coherent unity.'

Paul Borgman, Professor of English at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts

'David Wenkel has approached Luke's writings with skill and courage; adding to our understanding of the text. This is just the kind of result I have longed for, and I hope others will follow his lead.'

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What is ‘Perichoresis’—and Why Does It Matter?

Perichoresis as Properly Basic to the Christian Faith

John Jefferson Davis

I Perichoresis: Central to Christian Faith

Perichoresis is hardly a term that is part of the working vocabulary of most Christians today. This biblical concept, based on statements of Jesus such as ‘I am in the Father and the Father is in me’ (Jn 14:10), and others like it—referring to the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son—is generally considered to be of interest only to academic theologians—an enigmatic and esoteric idea with little practical significance for Christian living.

It is the purpose of this article to argue, on the contrary, that *perichoresis* belongs not on the margins of Christian faith, but at the very centre, and should be recognized as a vital biblical truth that illuminates the nature of Christian salvation, the believer’s personal relationship to Christ and the meaning of genuine fellowship in the church.

In arguing that perichoresis is

‘properly basic’ to the Christian faith, I am arguing that it is a primordial or fundamental concept that describes ‘how God essentially and eternally is’. As such, perichoresis is a doctrine that is not so much argued *to* as argued *from*. Perichoresis will be seen to offer a vision of community and deeper connection with other persons—often sought for in modern society, but rarely realized in the face of the fragmentation and busyness of modern life, even with the aid of social media.

This article will first, briefly review the history of the usage of this term in Christian theology; second, a working definition of the term will be offered; third, the New Testament data will be examined, with special reference to the life of Jesus in the gospel of John, and the ‘in Christ’ language of the apostle Paul; fourth, a philosophical analysis of the meaning of ‘person’ will be presented, in light of the biblical data, together with a proposal for a new con-

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cept of the ‘extended Self’; and fifth, and finally, some practical implications of perichoresis for the doctrines of soteriology (salvation), anthropology (nature of man), and ecclesiology (fellowship and ministry in the church) will be suggested.

II Perichoresis: Some Historical Trajectories

The concept of perichoresis was first introduced into theology by Gregory of Nazianzus in his *Epistle* 101, when he used the verb *perichoreo* to speak of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ: ‘Just as the natures are mixed, so also the names pass reciprocally into each (*perichorouσon*) other by the principle of this coalescence.’¹ Gregory here speaks of the interchange of names and attributes between the two natures that later came to be called the *communicatio idiomatum* or ‘communication of attributes’.²

¹ As cited by Verna Harrison, ‘Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers’, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991): 53–65 at page 55. For the history of perichoresis in Christian theology I have drawn on Harrison and G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 282–302; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1996), 175–202; and Jacques Fantino, ‘Circumcession’, in Jean-Yves Lacoste, ed., *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, v.1 (New York: Routledge, 2005), 315–16.

² A very careful recounting of the history of the concept of the *communication idiomatum* from the patristic period through the Reformation and post-Reformation periods is provided in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 296–307, ‘Mutual Interpenetration of the Natures as a Way of Understanding the Unity of Christ’.

The interpenetration of the natures was understood to be the ground of the interchange of the attributes.³

Maximus the Confessor, who studied Gregory’s writings, adopted the concept, and was the first to use the noun *perichoresis* to describe this movement of penetration in the person of Christ of the divine nature toward the human nature.⁴ In the seventh century John of Damascus took up the concept, being the first to apply it to the mutual interpenetration⁵ of the three persons of the Trinity:

(T)hese are indivisible and inseparable from each other and united into one, and interpenetrating one another without confusion ... they are three although united, and they are distinct, although inseparable.⁶

In the twelfth century, John of Damascus’ *The Orthodox Faith* was translated into Latin, and the concept of perichoresis entered into Western Trinitarian theology under the term *circumcession*. Other Latin theologians such as Thomas Aquinas affirmed the

³ A widely recognized biblical example of this ‘communication of attributes’ is found in Acts 20:28, where Paul speaks of the ‘church of God which he bought with his own blood’—where blood, a property of Christ’s human nature, is attributed to Christ as God in his divine nature.

⁴ Fantino, ‘Circumcession’, 315.

⁵ For the patristic usage of the noun *perichoresis* and the verb *perichoreo* with the sense of ‘interpenetrate’, or ‘interpenetration’, see G.W.H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 1077.

⁶ St. John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, III,5, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*, v.9, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, repr. 1994), 49.

notion of the indwelling of the divine persons of the Trinity, without using the term, as did the Council of Florence (1431–45) in its Decree of Union with the Jacobites.⁷

There has been little dogmatic development of the concept of perichoresis in the East since the time of John of Damascus, and little in the West since the middle ages. In the West, this relative lack of theological attention to the implications of perichoresis may be, in part, a consequence of the increasing scholastic elaboration of the doctrine of the Trinity, after the introduction of Aristotelean philosophy and the introduction of many technical distinctions that tended to separate Trinitarian doctrine from the lived experience of Christians.⁸ As the doctrine of the Trinity became somewhat marginalized as a result, the pivotal concept of perichoresis embedded within it tended to drop out of sight as well.

With the renewal of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity of the last several generations, sparked by the work of Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, and others, it now seems that the time has come to give this neglected biblical truth renewed theological attention, with a view to showing its significance not only for the Trinity and Christology, but for other vital areas of Christian theology as well—notably, for the doctrines of salvation and the church.

III Perichoresis: a Working Definition:

Before proceeding with a consideration of the biblical data, a working definition of perichoresis will be given, with a view to possible refinement in light of the biblical and theological analysis to follow. This working definition will draw from three different, but related, lines of thought: *shared interiority*; *reciprocal empathy*; and the '*Thou-Thou*' relationship.

In the first instance, perichoresis can be understood to involve a relationship of shared interiority, in which two (or more) persons share, at a deep level, their inner lives with one another. It involves an 'opening of the heart' to the other, a giving of permission to the other to 'get inside' my life.

When Jesus says that 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me', the preposition 'in' does not refer to one physical object being spatially inside the other, but rather, one person being 'in' the other in a relational manner that engages mind, will, and emotions. Jesus and the Father are in a mutually 'open hearted' relation with one another, that puts them 'on the same page' with one another, in a unity of understanding, purpose, and emotion.

Perichoresis can also be viewed as a personal relationship characterized by *mutual empathy*, with empathy being defined simply as 'the ability to feel another's experience'.⁹ When the

⁷ Fantino, 'Circumcession', 315, 316.

⁸ As argued by the Catholic theologian Catherine Lacugna in *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 168–69.

⁹ This definition of empathy is borrowed from Sim Van der Ryn, *Design for an Empathic World: Reconnecting People, Nature and Self* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2013). The term 'empathy' was coined in 1909 by the psychologist Edward Titchener, as a translation of the German *Einfühlung* ('feeling into').

apostle Paul admonishes the Christians in Rome to ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice’ and to ‘mourn with those who mourn’ (Rom 12:15), he is, in effect, pointing to such an experience of mutual empathy as a characteristic of Christian fellowship or *koinonia*. Jesus, in his prayer for us as his disciples, prayed that we might experience the joy that he experiences with the Father (Jn 17:13)—that we might participate in the reciprocally empathic joy that the Father knows in him and that he knows in the Father.

From a third vantage point, perichoresis can be viewed as a ‘Thou-Thou’ relationship, along the lines of Martin Buber’s personalist philosophy of his well-known work, *I and Thou*.¹⁰ In such a relationship each person seeks to know the other not impersonally as an ‘It’, as mere object or instrument of one’s own self-interests, but as a ‘Thou’ who has opened the heart to share the inner life, with no ulterior motives, but only in a stance of reciprocal self-donation. Likewise, as an ‘I’ in that relationship, each person intends to allow the other to know himself or herself as a ‘Thou’, in reciprocal openness, transparency and trust.

In the light of the biblical analysis to follow, it hopefully will become evident that God’s design for his people from the beginning was that they might come to experience with one another and with himself the ‘Thou-Thou’ quality of relationship that characterizes the Triune life of the Father, Son, and the Spirit. In short, *perichoretic communion* could be understood as a

‘heart-to-heart’ or ‘heart-in-heart’ connection between two or more persons characterized by reciprocal empathy.

IV Perichoresis in the Life of God and the People of God: New Testament Perspectives:

In this section we will highlight New Testament passages that illustrate perichoresis in Jesus’ relationship to the Father, and in the relationships of Christians with God and with one another, with special references to the Johannine and Pauline texts.

1. Johannine texts

Jesus’ programmatic statement that ‘I am in the Father and the Father is in me’ (Jn 14:10) was noted at the beginning of this paper. Elsewhere in the Johannine literature we can see that the relationship of perichoretic communion that Jesus enjoyed with the Father is promised to his disciples, through the arrival and presence of the Holy Spirit, and realized in the experience of fellowship in the churches. Jesus’ high priestly prayer (Jn 17) points to the eschatological perfection of this communion in the life to come.

During the farewell discourse Jesus announces that ‘On that day (when the Spirit arrives: 14:16) you will realize that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you’ (Jn 14:20). Jesus was teaching the disciples that this perichoretic language of being ‘in him’, so enigmatic before his cross and resurrection, would become understandable after Pentecost and the reception of the Spirit, for the Spirit would take them ‘inside’ Jesus’ interior experience, and allow them to have an expe-

10 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970).

riential and subjective understanding of the meaning of his words.

This is why Jesus could also say, ‘It is for your *advantage* that I go away; unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you’ (Jn 16:7). Jesus was making the astonishing promise that his disciples would have an even more intimate relationship with himself when he was physically absent—for though absent in the body, he would be present with them in the Spirit in a new way, in which the Spirit would take them ‘inside’ the heart experience of Jesus, creating a new condition of reciprocally shared, empathic life. Even before the arrival of the Spirit, he instructed them to expect a new closeness and indwelling with the Father and himself (Jn 14:23), and that abiding in him in this perichoretic communion, like a branch in the vine (Jn 15:5), was the secret of being a fruitful disciple.

In his epistles John gives evidence that Jesus’ promise of perichoretic communion was being fulfilled in his circle of churches, through the arrival and reception of the Spirit. Christian existence, he announces, is a matter of experiencing communion with the Father and the Son and with those who are experiencing this joyful fellowship (1 Jn 1:3). By abiding in the apostolic teaching, the believers abide *in the Son* and *in the Father* (1 Jn 3:24), and they do so in view of the anointing of the Spirit, who remains *in them* (1 Jn 3:27).

In John’s ‘logo-pneumatic’ (Word-Spirit) epistemology of Christian experience, the believers know that they live in him, and Christ in them (= perichoretic communion), because he has given us his Spirit (1 Jn 4:13)—in fulfilment of the promise of Jn 14:20. The anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 Jn

2:20) enables the believers to discern the truth and to remain in it; by so doing, they remain *in the Son* and *in the Father* (1 Jn 2:24).

Jesus’s high priestly prayer (Jn 17) pointed to the eschatological perfecting of the believer’s perichoretic communion with God and the people of God: ‘I pray ... that all of them may be one, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be *in us* so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (Jn 17:20,21). In this enormously important statement, Jesus prayed that his disciples would ultimately experience the depth of unity in fellowship among themselves—and with himself and the Father—that he had experienced from eternity with the Father—as they experienced what it meant to be ‘*in us*’.

Such a supernatural degree of unity, produced by the ministry of the Spirit, and so poorly realized in the history of the church, would be fundamental to the success of the Christian mission, and the world’s recognition that Jesus had indeed been sent by the Father (17:21b).

2. Pauline texts

The reality of perichoretic communion with Christ in the Spirit is fundamental to Paul’s understanding of Christian existence as well. The apostle’s pervasive use of the language of being ‘*in Christ*’ or Christ being ‘*in*’ the believer was a consequence of the fact that he, like John and the other apostles, had himself experienced the fulfilment of Jesus’ promise of Jn 14:20. Paul had not only a dramatic encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, objectively and externally, but having

received the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17, 18) through Ananias' prayer and laying on of hands, he came to know Christ as dwelling in him, subjectively and internally.

Paul realized that he himself was a new creature (2 Cor 5: 17), and that his old self-centred life had been replaced by a new centre—Christ living *in* him (Gal 2:20) and ministering through him. On the basis of his new perichoretic communion with Christ, in the Spirit, he was able to teach his disciples that they too were ‘*in Christ*’ and that Christ was in them (Col 1:27).

Because they had the indwelling Spirit, as adopted sons and daughters of the Father, they, like Jesus, could experience perichoretic intimacy with God and address him in prayer as ‘*Abba*’ (Gal 4:4-6; Rom 8:15,16). God their Father was not only ‘above’ them but among them and even *in* them (Eph 4:6, ‘*in all*’). To be a Christian is to have the indwelling Spirit (Rom 8:9), who makes us to be in Christ (Rom 8:1), and who enables us to know the mind of Christ and God, as the Spirit reveals to us the truths hidden deep in the interior life of God (1 Cor 2:10-12).

Paul’s language of perichoretic communion, of union with Christ and being in Christ, was no mere figure of speech or merely a matter of being under the authority of Christ,¹¹ but was the expression of a radically new metaphysical and ontological reality: the presence of God *within* the church and the believer, in an astonishing depth of

intimacy through which God intended to impart all the fullness of his love for Christ his Son (Eph 3:17-19).

V Perichoresis and the Metaphysics of ‘Person’:

In order to advance the argument here being presented that perichoresis is not merely a strange property of the Trinitarian persons, but a property or capacity that is shared (in an analogical sense) by human beings, some metaphysical analysis of the nature of ‘person’¹² will be needed. The working definition of ‘person’ that is stipulated for the purposes of the present discussion is as follows: ‘an intelligent subject of experiences that has the capacity for self-consciousness and awareness of a relationship to God’. This stipulated definition is deliberately formulated from within a biblical and Christian frame of reference.

With this stipulated definition of person in mind, there are two common assumptions concerning the nature of ‘person’ that need to be examined: 1) that human beings, with physical bodies, are the primary and paradigmatic examples of personhood; and 2) that human persons are essentially *contained* or circumscribed by their bodies. The point of examining these assumptions is that both can be mental barriers to understanding the meaning of perichoresis and Jesus’ statement that ‘I am in the Father and the Father is in

¹¹ See William B. Barclay, *Christ in You: A Study in Paul’s Theology and Ethics* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1999), 5-19 for a review of modern scholarly discussions of the Pauline ‘Christ in you/me’ language.

¹² For historical surveys of the meanings of this somewhat elusive and often problematic notion of ‘person’, see: Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Retrieving the Tradition: Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology’, *Communio* 17:3(1990): 439-54.

me': how can two persons be 'in' one another?

1. Primary examples of personhood

As to the first assumption, it should be recognized that from a biblical and Christian point of view, the category of 'person' is not limited to human beings, but includes the divine persons of the Trinity and spiritual beings such as angels and demons as well. It could be and in fact should be argued that the divine persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and not human persons are the proper epistemic and ontological baselines or paradigm for what it means to be a 'person'.

The Pauline statement that the divine Father is the source of all 'fatherhood' in heaven and earth (Eph 3:14, 15) certainly points in this direction: human fatherhood is an image and analogy of the divine—rather than the reverse. Similarly, the biblical notion that human beings are made in the *image of God* implies that God is the original and that humans are the derivative reflections of what it means to be a personal being.

The point of arguing that divine persons are the primary exemplars of personhood is to notice that *having a physical body* is, technically, an 'accidental' and not a *necessary* property of a person. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and angels and demons do not have material bodies as do human beings, but they are indeed personal agents.¹³

¹³ As another possible analogy, consider a personal assistant app on a smartphone such as 'Siri'. Siri *speaks* and has personal charac-

The further point to be noticed from the foregoing observations is that persons without material bodies are not subject to some of the limitations of persons with material bodies, viz, *impenetrability*. That is to say, two material bodies—such as two bowling balls or two apples—cannot interpenetrate one another and be 'in' one another, occupying the same region of space at the same time.¹⁴

However—and this is a crucial point—*non-material* entities can in fact occupy the same region of space at the same time and so interpenetrate one another. Examples of the latter non-material entities could include various forms of *energy* such as sound waves from human voices or musical instruments, and different wave lengths of electromagnetic radiation (visible light, infrared, ultraviolet, x-rays, microwaves, radio waves, television signals, cell phone signals, Wi-Fi connections, etc.) that can be present in the same room simultaneously.

At a cocktail party many voices and many conversations from many persons are all present in the same room and 'interpenetrate' one another. Similarly, when a trio of jazz musicians are playing a piece of jazz together, the

teristics such as intelligence and the ability to interact with human persons—though without a physical body—being embedded in software and a silicon-based internet server.

¹⁴ The impenetrability of solid material objects is a consequence of what in physics is known as the Pauli Exclusion Principle. Light and electromagnetic radiation, however, are not subject to the Pauli Exclusion Principle, and so can be present simultaneously in the same region of space. See Michela Massimi, *Pauli's Exclusion Principle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

physical bodies of the pianist, the bass player, and the drummer are not literally ‘in’ one another, but they are together ‘into’ the music, and the sound of each instrument is taken into the experience of the other musicians, while each maintains his or her own identity and part.

More generally, then, we can say that while material objects do not interpenetrate one another, a material object can be penetrated by a non-material entity (e.g., a human body penetrated by x-rays during a physical exam), and one non-material (mental; spiritual; electromagnetic radiation) entity can penetrate another non-material entity (e.g., two voices in the room; the sounds of three musical instruments; one mind speaking into another mind). Material objects are not capable of perichoresis—but non-material entities or agents are.

2. Contained by their bodies

The illustrations above of conversations at a cocktail party or jazz musicians playing jazz are relevant to the second assumption that is being questioned: the assumption that human persons are ‘contained’ or circumscribed by their bodies. While it is true that human beings are in a significant sense ‘in’ their own bodies, and as such can be said to have a definite location in space ('here' rather than 'there'), an important qualification of this common-sense assumption needs to be made.

More properly, I wish to argue that human beings, while *centred* in their bodies, are neither *reducible* to their bodies, nor *circumscribed* by their bodies, in a sense that is to be explained.

Human beings have not only physical bodies, but also *minds*. Human minds, while connected to the brain, are not identical to the brain, and are endowed with non-material capacities of understanding, language, and speech.

Human persons are not circumscribed by their bodies in the sense that as intelligent agents, human beings can *extend* themselves and their personal presence beyond the boundaries of their physical bodies through the use of instruments, tools, language, and written and electronic media.

Human beings are not only embodied *Selves*, but more importantly, for the purpose of this argument, *extended Selves*.¹⁵ As intelligent agents, human beings can extend themselves into the world and to other humans not only by physical contact (e.g., a handshake or a hug or kiss), but through social media and through speech and language.

Whenever one person speaks to another, in deeper openness of heart and vulnerability, one person is being allowed into the other’s inner world. If the conversation is a mutual conversation of ‘Thou’ with ‘Thou’, they are mentally, emotionally, and relationally ‘in’ one another. Just as the Holy Spirit is inside the mind of God the Father (1 Cor 2:10-12), with access to the ‘deep things of God’ and the inner life of the Father, in a relationship of perichoretic communion between Father and Spirit, so is deep conversation and empathetic, personal sharing between two people an image of this Trinitarian perichoresis.

¹⁵ I have presented this notion of the extended Self in my earlier article, ‘How Personal Agents Are Located in Space’, *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011): 449-55.

Human conversation is a form of communication. Communication between persons can open up *communion* between persons; and such communion between persons can be a reflection of and a participation in, at the ideal limit—the perichoretic communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Human bodies, strictly speaking, cannot occupy the same space at the same time, but human *minds* and *hearts* can be connected and ‘in the same place’ by open and honest words and language.

Recent research in neuroscience appears to indicate that human beings are in some sense ‘hard-wired for empathy’, in that the mirror neurons in the brain allow us, through imitation of facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, and so forth, to enter empathetically into the experience of others.¹⁶ Far from being limited only to the persons of the Trinity, the capacity for perichoretic relationships—reciprocal sharing of inner experience—can be recognized as a *basic capacity of human beings*.

Human beings made in the image of God, with the powers of speech and language, were *designed for perichoresis*, so to speak. It might be said that all the world’s great love poetry and love songs are expressions of the longing of the human heart for such ‘heart-to-heart’ and ‘heart-in-heart’ perichoretic intimacy. It was precisely for such an optimal quality of personal

relationships for which Christ prayed (Jn 17:21) in his greatest prayer, the prayer that expressed Jesus’ vision of the ultimate *telos* of our Christian salvation.

VI ‘Perichoresis for the Rest of Us’: Some Practical Applications

At the beginning of this essay the claim was set forth that perichoresis was not just a mysterious property unique to the Trinity, but was ‘properly basic’ to the Christian faith, and as a fundamental truth had important implications for salvation, the Christian life, and fellowship and ministry in the church. This discussion will be concluded with some brief indications of how perichoresis and perichoretic communion illuminate these aspects of Christian faith and life.

With respect to soteriology or the doctrine of salvation, the crucial statement in Jesus’ high priestly prayer (Jn 17:21) reveals that perichoretic communion is the highest fulfilment and ultimate purpose of Christ’s redemptive work:

My prayer ... is that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are *in me* and I am *in you*. May they also be *in us* so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

In this astonishing prayer for unity, which is at its heart a revelation of the nature of salvation, and not only a prayer for church unity—Jesus prays that as a result of his redemptive work, his disciples might be ‘*in us*,’ having the interior heart experience of the Father’s love that he himself enjoyed, and that the disciples might have such

¹⁶ Marco Iacoboni, *Mirroring People: The Science of Empathy and How We Connect with Others* (New York: Picador, 2008), pp. 116, 119: mirror neurons in the brain connect with the limbic areas to facilitate emotions and empathy, and help us to imitate and understand the emotions of others.

perichoretic, ‘heart-to-heart’, ‘Thou-Thou’ relationships with one another. His prayer for the church’s final end reveals what was the purpose of the Triune God from the beginning.

The promise of salvation in the Old Covenant was epitomized in the promise of ‘Emmanuel’, ‘God *with* us’. In the New Covenant this promise is not only fulfilled, but taken to an even deeper level: ‘God *in* us’. Jesus’ prayer will be fully answered in the world to come, only when *all* God’s people, together and in unity, enjoy the intimate communion with the Father that Jesus knows in the Spirit. God who as Redeemer is ‘in heaven’, ‘above us’, and who is also near and *among* us, is finally *in* us, as Father, Son, and Spirit dwell in the hearts of every believer, sharing with us the love, joy, peace, and glory that Jesus knows in the Father.

The concept of perichoresis embedded in Jn 17:21 (and elsewhere) allows us to bring together the legal and forensic categories of western soteriology with the ‘mystical’ and participatory categories of the East.¹⁷ The atonement and forgiveness of sins allows us to come into God’s presence with confidence (Heb 10: 19,22). Forgiveness of sins, however, while the basis and beginning of salvation, is not the final end.

Christ’s highest purpose in going to the cross was that on the basis of the forgiveness provided, all of God’s peo-

ple together and unitedly might enjoy his own intimate communion with the Father in the Spirit—that we might dwell ‘in the bosom of the Trinity’ as he himself dwells ‘in the bosom’ of the Father (Jn 1:18). Jesus promises that his disciples can experience being indwelt by him (Jn 17:26), even as he indwelt the Father. Perichoresis is the basis of the believer’s union with Christ, the concept that is so central to the soteriological understanding of both John and Paul.¹⁸

VII Perichoresis in Practice

What does such a union look like in practice? Three examples might be given: one from Jesus’ own experience of joy with the Father; a second from the early Christian experience of sonship and adoption; and a third one from church history, Wesley’s spiritual awakening at Aldersgate. Each will be viewed in light of the concept of perichoretic communion as understood in this essay.

1. Joy

In Luke’s account of the return of the seventy two from a mission, we are told that at that time ‘Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth ... ’, (Lk 10:21). The Trinitarian nature of this incident is apparent: Jesus the Son experiences a joy mediated by a fresh affusion of the Holy Spirit in an

¹⁷ I have discussed in greater detail such an integration of western and eastern soteriologies in the chapter, ‘Salvation Reconceptualized: Is Our Western Gospel Big Enough?’ in John Jefferson Davis, *Practicing Ministry in the Presence of God* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, forthcoming, 2015).

¹⁸ I have discussed the concept of union with Christ, and its biblical and metaphysical dimensions in *Meditation and Communion with God* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 41-51.

act of spontaneous prayer and thanksgiving to the Father.

This text could be viewed in the light of two others: John 14:20 ('On that day [when the Spirit comes: 14:16,17] you will know that I am in the Father and you are in me, and I am in you'), and Romans 5:5 ('God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us').

In Luke 10:21 we have a beautiful picture of Jesus' own experience of perichoretic communion with the Father—of being 'in the Father' in 'heart-to-heart' contact. He was experiencing at that moment what he promised that his disciples would later experience—and also understand on the basis of that experience—when they personally received the Spirit. Jesus was experiencing that of which Paul spoke in Rom 5:5: the love of God the Father was being poured afresh into his heart by the Spirit; *joy is the feeling of love experienced.*

2. Sonship and adoption

The reality of perichoretic communion with God the Father can be illustrated from the New Testament and early Christian experience with reference to *sonship* and *adoption*. The apostle Paul reminded the believers in Galatia that they had received the Spirit, through faith, when they believed the gospel (Gal 3:2,3, 14). Because they were consequently sons of God by adoption, and no longer slaves, God the Father had sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, who called out 'Abba, Father!' (Gal 4:6,7; cf. Rom 8:15, 16).

The Holy Spirit was reduplicating the prayer language of Jesus in their hearts, communicating to them the

sense of intimacy and affection of Jesus' own perichoretic communion ('I am in the Father') with the Father. This reality of perichoretic communion with the Father, mediated by the Spirit, was, in early Christianity—and can be today—a *conscious* experience that can be known: 'This is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us' (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13: 'We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit').

3. Spiritual awakening

John Wesley's experience of spiritual awakening at Aldersgate could also be viewed through the lens of perichoretic communion. On the evening of May 24, 1738, at a Moravian meeting where Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans* was being read, Wesley felt that 'his heart was strangely warmed', as he came to experience a true meaning of the gospel and justification by faith alone. In Wesley's own account in his Journal, he recalls:

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.¹⁹

The Holy Spirit's work of *illuminating* biblical truth in this way was, in fact, bringing Wesley into perichoretic communion with Christ and the Father.

¹⁹ *Journal of John Wesley*, accessed at www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/journal.vi.ii.xvi.htm.

In this case the Spirit connected not only with Wesley’s mind in new spiritual understanding, and with the will in new attitude and motivation, but with the affections and feelings as well, as Wesley came to personally experience grace—the Father’s favour and affection for him in Christ. As a result, John Wesley was from that moment, a new creature in Christ.

4. Anthropology

The perichoretic nature of New Testament soteriology can shed light on biblical anthropology, the Christian understanding of the human person. The vision of the nature of the redeemed human’s final end reveals what was God’s purpose for humanity from the beginning, from eternity. We might say that human beings were designed by God for perichoresis—for intimacy, for communion. Or to state this in yet another way, we could say that being made in the image of God is to be constituted with a capacity for perichoresis, to enjoy a quality of life with God like that which Jesus knew with the Father.

The notion that perichoresis is a concept that is fundamental for an understanding of what it means to be human could be further unpacked with three other terms, each of which begins with the prefix ‘inter’, and each of which reflect the relationships within the Trinity: *interconnected*; *intersubjective*; and *interdependent*. Within the holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Spirit are deeply and intrinsically interconnected, fully sharing the common divine nature, agreeing in common purpose, and united in mutual love. Their consciousnesses are not private and self-

enclosed, but open and transparent to one another, while yet retaining the distinctiveness of the ‘I’ in relationship to the other as ‘Thou’. Father, Son, and Spirit work not independently, but in partnership and harmony in all the works of redemption *ad extra*.²⁰

Inasmuch as human beings made in the image of God reflect, in a partial and analogous manner, the dynamics of the Trinitarian life, such human lives should be lived with a consciousness of their own interconnectedness, intersubjectivity, and interdependence. Human beings must be *connected* to survive: connected to an environment, with air and water and sunlight and the food chain; to families, neighbourhoods, and social institutions; and to God and to the people of God.

Our subjectivity and emerging sense of ‘self’ and personal identity is not formed in some Cartesian, privatized subjectivity, but intersubjectively.²¹ Human beings learn language and develop as human beings through social interactions and institutions. Just as the Father and the Son have identities in relation to one another, so it is that human beings achieve a sense of identity only through their social interactions with others in the context of communities that transmit their stories, beliefs and practices to the next generations.

²⁰ In this respect the perichoretic communion of Father, Son, and Spirit can be seen as the basis for the patristic formula, *Opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*.

²¹ On the critical role of social processes in the formation of personal identity, see George Herbert Mead, *On Social Psychology: Selected Papers*, ed. Anselm Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 19-42.

5. Church fellowship and ministry

Finally, perichoresis can illuminate the nature of fellowship and ministry in the life of the church. *Koinonia* or fellowship is, at its best, not merely a matter of Christians enjoying social contacts or participating in common tasks, but more properly, a deep sharing of a common life, a life of communion with the Father and the Son (1 Jn 1:3).

Such perichoretic communion involves an ‘opening of the heart’ between Christians. It was for such a depth and quality of relationship that the apostle Paul hoped in his appeal to the Corinthians: ‘We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you ... As a fair exchange ... open wide your hearts also’ (2 Cor 6:11–13). His admonition to the believers in Rome to ‘... rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn’ (Rom 12:15) was a directive to practise perichoretic communion with one another, to relate to one another in reciprocal empathy.

Luke’s characterization of life in the early Jerusalem church subsequent to Pentecost could be seen as a manifestation of such perichoretic communion. The believers were ‘all together’ (Acts 2:44), and were ‘one in heart and mind’ and ‘shared everything they had’ (Acts 4:32). One consequence of this remarkably attractive quality of Christian common life was numerical growth: ‘the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved’ (Acts 2:47).

The concept of perichoresis can illuminate the nature of ministry in the New Testament and in the church today. Jesus practised ministry in perichoretic

communion with the Father: the miracles that he performed were not done acting alone; they reflected the fact that the Father was in him and that he was in the Father (Jn 10:38). He never spoke on his own authority, but first listened to the Father, and then spoke what the Father commanded him to say (Jn 12:49, 50; 8:26). Before acting, he first observed what the Father was doing (Jn 5:19). Jesus practised ministry with a consciousness of being in the presence of the Father (Jn 8:29) and in partnership with the Father, and his perichoretic practice of ministry is the pattern for our ministries as disciples of Christ.²² Ministering for Christ is first a matter of abiding in Christ (Jn 15:5), for apart from him our ministries will have not have lasting and eternal value.

Perichoretic communion, then, can be seen to be ‘properly basic’ to the Christian faith—to Christian salvation, life, and ministry. Christian existence is a life of interconnectedness, inter-subjectivity, and interdependence—a participation in the life of the Trinity, in Jesus’ joyous fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that when the Spirit came his disciples would know by personal experience that he was in the Father and that ‘you are in me, and I am in you’ (Jn 14:20). It is our great privilege as his disciples to believe that promise and to live into it, for by so doing, we will increase the likelihood that the world will believe that Jesus was indeed the one who was sent by the Father (Jn 17:21).

²² I have developed this point in greater detail in John Jefferson Davis, *Practicing Ministry in the Presence of God* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, forthcoming 2015).

Sin v. Taboo Compatibility in Africa and the West: Implications for inter-cultural Mission, Church, and Majority World Development

Jim Harries

I Introduction

The question; 'What happened to sin?' seems to be related to another question; 'What happened to God?' Neither sin nor God appears to be prominent in western discourse, especially in Europe, in recent generations. At one time sin and God were important concepts used by western people to make sense of life.¹ What has changed? What are some of the implications of the dearth of discussions on sin or on God? How have sin and God apparently disappeared from people's view and from their conversations?

I take up this discussion in relation to 'traditional' concepts of right and wrong, especially taboo. These seemed to 'disappear' before sin: in 1777 Cap-

tain James Cook 'discovered' *taboo* in Polynesia.² Following his 'discovery', the term *taboo* (or *tabu*) has been borrowed from Polynesian and incorporated into English and other European languages.³ A declaration of taboo is based on 'partiality that prevents objective consideration of an issue or situation'.⁴ Taboo is 'an interdiction that does not make rational sense'.⁵ It seems that taboo is closely related to traditional (extra-scientific) concepts of impurity that are to do with designations of wholeness.⁶

2 <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/taboo>

3 <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/taboo>

4 <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/taboo>

5 Robert J. Priest, 'Missionary Positions: Christian, Modernist, Post-modernist', *Current Anthropology*, 42(1), February 2001, 29-68, 32.

6 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 35-38.

1 Robert J. Priest, 'Cultural Anthropology, Sin, and the Missionary'. 85-105 in D.A. Carson, & John D. Woodbridge, (eds.), *God and Culture: essays in honour of Carl F.H. Henry* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1993), 97.

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What I suggest ought to surprise us is that *Captain Cook's discovery of taboo was a discovery*. Such a discovery to have been a discovery implies that those who 'discovered' it found it foreign. Hence they described it using a borrowed word. This is particularly surprising because taboo concepts are replete in the Bible.⁷ The Bible was hardly unknown literature in Europe. How can the concept of taboo have been so much of a 'discovery'? How and why had taboo become such a foreigner to western society?

The meanings of some key words that I use in this article seem to shift and change sufficiently in these pages to make it at times difficult to pin down the arguments I am making. For example, my pointing out that sin is subtly being redefined by different groups of people makes it difficult to be clear just what I mean in subsequent uses of the term sin. It is as if this article looks at the way the ground shifts under itself.

My reference to 'the West' is to those communities / societies operating under profound influences arising from seminal changes brought to their people by the western Christian church. Key changes in the West seem to be particularly connected to papal activity in the 11th Century.⁸

II Anthropologists and Missionaries

Authorities generally have their oppo-

nents. Theologians are no exception. Developments in western thinking in recent centuries have been tying the hands of theologians. Theologians seemed to lose the position of being the presumed pace-setters in social thinking.⁹ Theologians struggled then to deal with the popular sweeping claims of modernity, much as they continue so to struggle. Much of this struggle is well known to secularists who consider themselves to be dominant in today's world and who like to undermine the legitimacy of the church. We could say that theologians had already lost their hegemony when what appeared to be a 'fatal-blow' that I want to examine here, struck home.

I thank Robert Priest for providing some insights that I want to build on into the question of why and how theologians have lost ground to anthropologists.¹⁰ Fear of sin and its consequences had been, it appears, very real¹¹ and very normal in western society for many generations. While perhaps not uniformly present, fear of sin resulting in attempts at avoidance of sin, were once foundational to western people.¹²

At the same time that theologians were losing their hegemony in western belief, the non-western world be-

⁹ My use of the term 'social' here seems to illustrate the issue that I am trying to address: The very term 'society' implies that sociology and not theology gives the best means of access to an understanding of the lives of people.

¹⁰ Priest, 'Missionary' and Priest, 'Cultural'.

¹¹ I assume, as did Hiebert, that the category of 'real' needs to be critically re-examined. (Paul G. Hiebert, 1999. *Missionological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: affirming truth in a modern/postmodern world* [Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999].)

¹² Priest, 'Cultural', 97.

⁷ James George Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1923).

⁸ Harold Joseph Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition, Volume 1* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 529-536.

gan to be opened up to exploration. Missionaries often followed close in the wake of explorers. Often, anthropologists were not far behind. Most early anthropologists were missionaries who became interested in acquiring a more detailed understanding of the people they were seeking to reach. In due course, anthropologists tried to discredit missionary researchers so as to place anthropology on a 'secular' foundation.¹³

The line between 'missionary researcher' and 'anthropologist' was not always clear cut and singular. Missionaries are not unaffected by the contexts they are brought up in. On the contrary—19th century western missionaries must have been influenced, as were anthropologists, by the booming industrial/scientific societies from which they themselves came. These societies helped them to define what should be considered as 'progress'. Far from wanting to be left out of modern progressive schemes, missionaries wanted to share their ideas on 'progress' with those in the majority world whom they found to be poor and ignorant.¹⁴ They were borrowing from the thinking that was giving secularism a singular foothold in the western world.

Missionaries have always tried to teach their understandings of sin to

converts and potential converts in the 'fields' in which they worked. In the 18th and 19th centuries their understanding of sin was inevitably to an extent a 'modern' one. In this modern understanding, sins that were important were those that had real perceivable or predictable negative effects. That is to say that by the 19th century, missionaries had made a separation between sin and taboo. Early missionaries to Africa such as Dos Santos (1586-97) did not seem to clearly distinguish 'natural' from 'supernatural' causation. Dos Santos described many cures for illnesses that would these days be considered 'magical'; for example that 'night blindness could be cured by washing the affected eyes in the drinking water of pigeons'.¹⁵ 'Well into the eighteenth century, leading scientists in Europe compiled their findings from a range of sources in which later generations would find fables and magic', adds Harries.¹⁶ The pre-18th Century failure to perceive 'pure science' clearly paralleled the failure to perceive a clear difference between sin (related to science) and taboo (related to superstition). Taboo made less and less sense to those missionaries of the 19th century and beyond. It came to be associated with superstition, so was of lesser importance. The missionaries concentrated on 'real' sin. Perhaps

¹³ Patrick Harries, and David Maxwell, 'Introduction.' 1-29 in: Patrick Harries, and David Maxwell (eds.), *The Spiritual in the Secular: Missionaries and Knowledge about Africa (Studies in the History of Christian Missions)* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 20.

¹⁴ Fidelis Nkomazana, 'Livingstone's Ideas of Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation'. 44-57, *Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 12(1&2), (1998), 55.

¹⁵ Cited by Harries (Patrick Harries, 'Natural Science and Naturvoelker: missionary entomology and botany'. 30-71 in Patrick Harries, and David Maxwell (eds.), *The Spiritual in the Secular: Missionaries and Knowledge about Africa (Studies in the History of Christian Missions)* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 35.)

¹⁶ Harries, 'Natural', 39.

this was a great mistake? I ask in this essay; did missionaries' concepts of sin become so refined as to result in subsequent cohorts of anthropologists finding them to be absent in some majority world communities?

The link between notions of taboo and, to use Douglas' terminology, contagion,¹⁷ should be becoming clear. Taboo brings impurity, such as the uncleanness that the pre-modern world associates(ed) with leprosy, that is extra-scientific. Yet if, as I here suggest, notions of taboo are essential to human social history, questions of the importance of ritual purity would seem to require re-opening in today's world.

19th century anthropology saw itself as building on notions of objectivity and secularism as against theology, divinity and superstition. Hence anthropology can be considered a counter-cult movement. It came to define itself particularly in opposition to Christianity.¹⁸ Anthropology set itself up against the church.¹⁹ Its teachings opposed those of the church even as they echoed them and followed their contours, in reverse:

(A)nthropology came to believe without much qualification its own claims to be a secular discipline, and failed to notice that it had in

¹⁷ Mary Douglas, 'Sacred Contagion' 86-106 in: John F.A. Sawyer, (ed.) *Reading Leviticus: a conversation with Mary Douglas*. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*, 227, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Priest 'Missionary', 94 and Priest 'Cultural', 32.

¹⁹ Fennella Cannell, 'The Christianity of Anthropology,' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 11, 2005, 335-356, 341.

fact incorporated a version of Augustinian or ascetic thinking within its own theoretical apparatus, even in the claim to absolute secularism itself.²⁰

Cannell concludes that 'anthropology is a discipline that is not always as "secular" as it likes to think'.²¹ Anthropology's roots in Christian theology are deep.

Meanwhile, at a time when definitions for sin were narrowing (i.e. excluding notions of taboo, see above), anthropologists acquired access to peoples who had been almost unaffected by 'modern progress'. This combination of events enabled them to turn the tables on the theologians. Tylor pointed out that: 'discourses about "primitive" (not-modern) man had utility for discrediting the view of theologians'.²² We could say: anthropologists had theologians surrounded!

Not only did anthropologists and other academics become leaders in promoting the modern, but now they also became leaders in defining the pre-modern. Missionary and church were sandwiched, painfully, in the middle.

Modernist discourses endlessly exploited the theme of social others who enjoyed freedom and pleasure without guilt precisely where European 'Christian' morality imposed restraint and inculcated a sense of sin. By implication, Christian interdictions were not inherent in universal morality but an unnecessary and

²⁰ Cannell, 'Christianity', 341.

²¹ Cannell, 'Christianity', 352.

²² Cited by Priest, 'Missionary', 32.

unhealthy imposition.²³

You are warning us of the horrors of sin, anthropologists seemed to tell the theologians, but we find primitive people who have no sin, and who seem to be doing better than us!

Christian missionaries were less proficient in contemporary academic discourse than were many professional anthropologists. As a result, they were little match for what was quickly to become recognised as a hegemonic message. It was as if sin was reified out of existence, and many were overjoyed by this circumstance:

For many a Westerner raised in a culture that emphasised sin and guilt the notion that there were people without such a consciousness of sin and guilt was electrifying.²⁴

III Sin / Taboo Transformations

I am suggesting that the concepts of 'sin' amongst 'primitive peoples' were (are) more akin to taboo than to western concepts of sin. That is to say: the connection between an act of sin and its negative consequences are for non-modern people more mysterious than rational or functional. In the hey-day of functionalism in anthropology (from the early 1920s until the 1960s),²⁵ in which notions of 'sin' were particularly likely to be valued according to their functionality (even by non-anthropologists), the connectedness of sin-equivalents to the functioning of mystical

forces in non-western communities being explored by anthropologists could render 'primitive' people's notions of sin invisible.

As a result 'primitive' man was not found to be labouring under sin as was modern man. Missionaries were accused of bearing not good news of joy and salvation, but guilt-provoking messages said to bear misery and pointless rules to those who had once been joyous and free! To use Priest's words: 'Lacking the European's sense of sin, such people were thought to enjoy a happiness that escaped the guilt-ridden European', a happiness that missionaries seemed to be setting out to destroy.²⁶

Secularists have been slow to realise how this state of affairs has been deceiving them. Philip Jenkins popularised the realisation that the church is booming in the global south.²⁷ If missionaries were spreading a useless faith, promoting guilt and misery that were destroying people's happiness, then why should people reach out to that faith and run with it? 'Whatever their image in popular culture, Christian missionaries of the colonial era succeeded remarkably', wrote Jenkins.²⁸

In practice, in many ways, what has happened is that when given the freedom to do so, 'primitive people' have redefined biblical sin in line with their own conceptions of the damage done through breaking of taboo.²⁹ Hence

²³ Priest, 'Missionary', 32.

²⁴ Priest, 'Cultural', 87.

²⁵ http://www.cultureandpublicaction.org/conference/cc_functionalism.htm

²⁶ Priest, 'Cultural', 88.

²⁷ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: the coming of global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

²⁸ Jenkins, *The Next*, 56.

²⁹ Observation made largely on the basis of

they join churches when under pressure 'from the entanglement and ordeals of persecution of evil spirits'.³⁰ Thus they have found release in a way that bypasses post-enlightenment and rational guilt-inflicting western notions of sin.

This tendency to re-define sin is widely evident in the mushrooming of independent Christian movements that can be witnessed around many parts of the world.³¹ A redefining of 'sin', that moves away from the very modern interpretation that allowed sin to be rejected by anthropologists is, I suggest, one of the foundation stones of the success of these movements.

I reported a classic instance of the above 'transformation' of sin in my PhD thesis.³² Missionaries finding no word for sin amongst Luo speakers of Kenya adopted the Luo term *richo* (also the plural of 'bad') to translate biblical terms for sin.³³ Usage of the term *richo* as early as 1978 gives clear evidence

personal experience in ministering in churches in Eastern and Southern Africa from 1988 to date. See also comments on *richo* below.

³⁰ <http://www.dialogueireland.org/dicontent/resources/dciarchive/ztypologyafrica.html>

³¹ David, B. Barrett, 1968, *Schism and Renewal in Africa. An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968).

³² Jim Harries, 'Pragmatic Theory Applied to Christian Mission in Africa: with special reference to Luo responses to "bad" in Gem, Kenya.' PhD Thesis, 2007, The University of Birmingham. <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/15/> (accessed 2nd January 2010), 132.

³³ Roy Stafford, 2003, 'Richo'. Email received on 14th August 2003. Roy was part of the team responsible for the 1976 translation of the Bible into Dholuo.

that understanding of *richo* quickly changed from this missionary-imposed one and came to mean a breaking of taboo.³⁴

Parallel to this is a confusion I often hear expressed in terms of biblical references to 'law'. Many Luo people, when they hear or read such reference, interpret biblical references to law as being with regard to their law, which is very much rooted in 'taboo', and not to the Mosaic law that is arguably more clearly rooted in rational notions of 'sin'.

The discovery of the existence of taboos in the Bible was apparently thought to discredit the Bible.³⁵ The notion that Christian missionaries, on the basis of some misguided notion of taboo, prescribed any but 'the missionary position' for sex became 'a symbol synthesising modernist objections to Christian morality'.³⁶ This 'myth of the missionary position' went on to essentialise 'Christian morality as taboo morality [which became] justification for imposing a taboo on speech from an explicitly religious subject position in academic discursive spaces'.³⁷ When 'speech from an explicitly religious position' was marked as disallowed, this was akin, because moral discourse is implicitly religious,³⁸ to a bar on moral

³⁴ This is illustrated by the title of Mboya's book, which could be translated something like 'It is Sin [i.e. breaking of taboo] that brings the Curse'. (Paul Mboya, *Richo ema Kelo Chira* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House Ltd, 1978).)

³⁵ Priest, 'Missionary', 32.

³⁶ Priest, 'Missionary', 36.

³⁷ Priest, 'Missionary', 45.

³⁸ William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: secular ideology and the roots*

discourse as a whole on the side of academia.³⁹

1. Taboo and sin disappear

This combination of circumstances has had a very interesting impact on the thinking of western populations. First, taboo as a category disappeared from sight, as all sensible/necessary morality was considered to arise from rational and not sub-rational prohibitions. Inevitably western theologians would have followed this trend and shifted to defining sin that is of any importance as being that which can rationally be seen to potentially cause some harm. Even some theologians joined in the chorus ‘mocking’ anything but rationally based morality.

Later, Christians being forced to realise that biblical sins were often inherently of taboo nature, meant that they had shot themselves in the foot! Because the sanitised non-taboo understanding of sin was not to be found amongst people being explored by anthropologists (classically the Samoans according to Margaret Mead⁴⁰ whose work was subsequently largely discredited according to Freeman)⁴¹ the modern West seemed to have found itself a means to escape both taboo and rational prohibitions on behaviour. From this developed a notion of

the taboo-free and sin-free Westerner that still seems to be very much with us today.

2. Creating unhealthy dependency

I want to explore further the notion of the sin-less and taboo-free Westerner. Recognition of this taboo and sin-free Westerner may require an alternative locus of perception. That is to say—within the West itself people’s ‘taboo-free’ and ‘sin-free’ existence may, because of its very normality, not be at all noteworthy or even noticeable. One perspective through which it becomes noticeable is an African one. While highly subjective, this claim does seem to be supported by various sorts of evidence. That is: it can be striking from an African perspective that Westerners seem to live without taboos, and without seeing themselves as committing ‘sins’.

While an association between black skin and evil may also go back a long way⁴² the contrast seems to have increased in the modern era—so much so in fact that many African societies that are all too aware of their own taboo and sin-ridden natures have capitulated completely (in theory at least) to trying to order their lives following western role models. Notions of both taboo and sin are rejected, or at least devalued, the justification being ‘look,

of modern conflict (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). (kindle version)

39 ‘The term religion comes to cover virtually anything humans do that gives their lives order and meaning’ (Cavanaugh, *The Myth*.)

40 Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (London: Harper Perennial, 1971).

41 Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 1986).

42 Just one example, the colour for Judas in the Coptic Orthodox church is frequently black, for example see: <http://fulbrightg.blogspot.com/2009/11/coptic-christianity-in-egypt.html> Coptic images of the last supper frequently portray Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus, as being black skinned.

that's what Europeans are doing, and they are (materially) doing very well out of it'.

This means of running one's country or community in which notions of sin and taboo are ignored is widely known as secularism. In practice what seems to be happening in the majority world to compensate for secularism is that religious institutions and practices flourish in what we might call the informal or non-government sector. Much analysis by anthropologists and other scholars has undervalued or even been totally blind to this sector, falsely perpetuating the notion of the out-datedness and non-essentiality of notions such as taboo and sin for human social existence. (Various authors point to the blindness of anthropological researchers to 'religion' in general. Evans-Pritchard points out that a disproportionately large number of anthropologists are 'non-religious'.⁴³ Kate Meagher, by way of example, points to a proliferation of 'religious movements' in Nigeria⁴⁴ whose impact she had 'largely unanticipated' as she began her research.)⁴⁵ If the Westerner can run his society without 'religion', then it is thought that the majority world should be able to do so. This notion unfortunately ignores the peculiar history of the West whereby secularism is a part of western 'religion' and has very religious roots.⁴⁶

⁴³ Evans-Pritchard, 'Religion', 162.

⁴⁴ Kate Meagher, 'Trading on Faith: religious movements and informal economic governance in Nigeria'. 397-423, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47(3), September 2009, 399.

⁴⁵ Meagher, 'Trading', 406.

⁴⁶ Richard Mohr, 'The Christian Origins of Secularism and the Rule of Law' 34-51 in: Na-

At least two things should be evident here: first, the raising of the European to a status in which he is not dependent on taboos that are of divine origin, he has pretty much come to be seen as a god himself.⁴⁷ Secondly, a project of majority world development is led by Westerners and western thinking that ignores vital components of a community's socio-economic development. If these are so naively ignored—what serious hope is there for the success of the kinds of development models that are these days being advocated?

It ought by now to be recognised in hindsight that the 'electrifying' euphoria felt on being told that one can live without sin and guilt was misguided.⁴⁸ The very enormous and very evident success of the missionary project should tell us as much. While secularists back at home may have mocked their missionary compatriots the majority world has become replete with churches. That is to say—the ground on which 'secular' society is being built has necessary religious roots without which the attendant superstructures could not be supported. It should be no surprise at all that African development, in so far as it is sponsored by secular thinking, is waxing, waning and progressing only through great de-

dirsyah Hoden, and Richard Mohr, (eds), *Law and Religion in Public Life: the contemporary debate* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 34.

⁴⁷ I mentioned above the foundation of taboo in precedent set by previous generations which comes to be understood in animistic communities as being upheld by ancestral spirits, that are themselves very much akin to gods.

⁴⁸ Priest, 'Missionary', 33 and Priest, 'Cultural', 88.

pendency on the importation of outside resources and thinking.

3. False foundation

The words of anthropologists sounded a clear note of rebellion in a western society in which the church had come to assume a hegemonic role over certain areas of people's lives. The churches' critics seemed to have firm ground to stand on. There was an electrifying crescendo of voices proclaiming an enlightened wisdom.⁴⁹ Yet recent developments have shown that anthropologists Melville, Maugham, Tippett, Mead and others were seriously misguided and seriously misguiding.⁵⁰

After-the-fact realisation of their error does not yet seem to have undone the enormous, albeit misguided, movement that they brought into existence, viz, a movement of anthropologists who claim not to be religious, yet the roots of whose discipline are deeply if perversely embedded in religious soil.⁵¹ The euphoria and associated indignation (suggesting that the church had been keeping people tied to false notions of guilt and unnecessary burdens of sin) has continued to contribute to widely spreading movements, in western society, of assumed freedom from the need to take account of sins and taboos.

Having recognised the basis of this as misguided, it remains to be asked what is actually going on in the con-

temporary West? And for our purposes especially, what are the implications for inter-cultural relationships with other parts of the world?

4. The absence of collective means of dealing with sin

I want to address part of the answer to this question below. We need to note that failing to deal with a key side to human existence had and has implications for other areas of life. It may be true that burdens of guilt and sin are reduced in western nations. It could also be true as a result that other issues—such as divorce, loneliness, fear of death, abortion, depression, and so on—have as a result come to the fore.

It seems a fair hypothesis to suggest that collective arrangements at dealing with guilt and sin, i.e. church attendance, contribute to a reduction in the prominence of these other maladies, thus resulting in a net gain in social harmony and personal well being. Certainly in many parts of Africa the prominence and widespread popularity of the church and the Christian message, point in this direction.

IV Life Without Sin or Taboo

The question of the effect of an apparent sinlessness and religionlessness (i.e. taboo-lessness, as religion and taboo are intimately connected) life on the impact of the West in the majority world is one that I now want to address in brief.

One impact has been for Westerners to appear to majority world people as being themselves somewhat like 'gods': their taboos are self-reasoned and self-appointed. Their self-acknowl-

⁴⁹ Priest, 'Missionary', 33, as cited above.

⁵⁰ Priest, 'Cultural', 88-89.

⁵¹ E.E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Religion and the Anthropologist', 155-171, in E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology and Other Essays* (New York: The Free Press, 1964), 162.

edged faultlessness and the confidence they have to blatantly ignore spiritual threats that arise from their failure to acknowledge the impact of sin on their lives adds to this reputation for Westerners.

An example of this is Westerners' ability to flagrantly display wealth without regard to any fear of the jealousy that this might evoke in others. Without guilt or sin leaving chinks in their spiritual armour, flagrant displays of wealth seem to bring no concern. This is by contrast with parts of Africa and presumably more widely in the majority world where fear of the jealousy of others can radically constrain people's behaviour. Maranz mentions this with reference to hiders.⁵² Witchcraft beliefs, of which Maranz makes only brief mention,⁵³ have an extremely widespread and powerful effect of restricting certain kinds of behaviour in many majority world communities.⁵⁴ Their absence in some western communities can be striking.

I suggest that witchcraft beliefs can helpfully be replaced by beliefs in *sin against God*. Belief in sin against God is much less socially damaging than is

witchcraft. (I here reflect Douglas' position, where she says that 'the [Levitical] priestly doctrine of uncleanness is like a general amnesty'.)⁵⁵ Essentially this is because whereas witchcraft beliefs direct people's enmity and suspicions against one another, faith in the activity of one almighty God neutralises such enmity through redirecting attention to the divine. The absence of either taboos or sin can be very confusing to people in the majority world who wonder how the more negative sides of human social behaviour can possibly be being dealt with or understood.

Not considering themselves subject to proscriptions based on notions of theological sin or taboo has given Westerners an incredible freedom. I suggest that this freedom is often more than majority world communities can cope with. Such lack of coping is related to economics: western nations with their burgeoning economies have means and resources at hand to help them cope with an atomisation of human existence. For example, they have resources available to support single mothers, divorcees, men addicted to alcohol, people infected by sexually transmitted diseases etc. These conditions can in poorer parts of the world be death sentences.

One result of doing away with sin and taboos is a massive rise in the cost of human existence: The above people, e.g. divorcees, alcoholics etc. often live alone, bringing higher costs than would shared housing. They use a lot of bio-medicines, spend a lot of time in the hospitals, engage in criminal activities, and so on. Such is beyond the lev-

52 David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: observations from Africa* (Dallas: SIL International, 2001), 138.

53 Maranz, *African*, 111. The reason he does this may be so as not to put off a secular readership, in order to get wider sales for his book.

54 Jim Harries, 'Witchcraft, Envy, Development, and Christian Mission in Africa', *Missionology: An International Review* 40(2), (2012), 129–139, 130. This has been recognised for a long time. For example see M. Gluckman, 'The Logic of African Science and Witchcraft' (321–331) in Max Marwick, (ed.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Middlesex: Penguin Education, 1970), 330.

55 Douglas, 'Sacred', 98.

els of economic productivity that many non-western human societies can cope with.

The West can be seen as the source of much evil in certain parts of the world. Hence Mbatiah tells us in his novel that '*elimu ya juu ndiyo hasa hotline ya kuuwasilisha uchafu wote wa utamaduni wa kimagharibi kutoka huko kwenvye asili yake, hadi hapa*' ([Western] higher education is indeed the hotline to connect all the dirt of the culture of the West from there from its source, to here [in Africa]).⁵⁶ Much of such evil is that which arises from human communities in the West having thrown aside taboo and sin-constraints on behaviour.

The greatest problem in the current global westernisation project is quite likely *above and beyond* the above. It is that the *non-West does not and cannot 'get it'*. The notion that life can be lived without the application of taboos is so incredible that it is beyond many people's imaginative grasp. Hence what the West considers as secularism is ironically often re-interpreted outside of the Western world as being 'tabooism'.

Such re-interpretation leads to considerable confusion. 'Many people in Nairobi are these days rejecting the Gospel in favour of secularism', an African colleague told me recently. I felt that I had more to learn of this situation so I continued to listen carefully as he talked. What he was calling secularism, I discovered, was people's returning to their traditional taboos. I would propose that even in so far as secularism could be a desirable aim,

that it is best reached through means of a displacement of taboo by sin, and not through a simple abolition of taboo and replacement with nothing.

Whereas traditional societies interpret the results of various human behaviours in their impact on the wider community through beliefs in taboo, the biblical notion of sin redirects this to God. This reduces, in theory at least, endless inter-personal suspicions and conflicts and so could be seen as a means towards the kinds of so-called secular principles that underlie a lot of functionality in today's world.

V The Necessity of Taboo

It is appropriate at this point to consider in more detail just what the categories are that we are considering. We are looking at three possible foundations for directing human behaviour. One of these is opposition to sin, which we can define as prohibition of behaviour based on an understanding of the requirements of an almighty sovereign God. (As discussed above, such a notion of sin cannot be entirely distinct from human thought and rationality, into which category it is subsumed to various degrees.)

Another is taboo; prohibitions of behaviour based on traditional experience of what leads to prosperous living and typically an assumed preference of the 'living dead', i.e. ancestors, who still have a determinative impact on living communities.

The third category is that of rationality. This is considered for some good reason by secularists to supersede the other categories. People who assume such supersession, however, can err in some of their understanding regard-

⁵⁶ Mwenda Mbatiah, *Upotevu* (Nairobi: Standard Textbooks, Graphics and Publishing, 1999), 52-53, my translation.

ing the origins of rationality. Berman makes it clear that the origins of rational law are in the church.⁵⁷

This is a topic in itself that falls beyond this essay, but in brief we can say that the widespread and deep penetration of the church into Europe enabled a hegemonic understanding of sin to take root, that included and increasingly was defined by rational understanding. This understanding came to exclude 'taboo' topics from within the category of sin.

The taboo nature of the Bible⁵⁸ I would suggest to be inevitable if we take an enlightened view of human existence. That enlightened view I take as being (using Plantinga's terms) a post-foundationalist view.⁵⁹ Foundationalism that seemed to rein supreme in the West until the mid 20th century supposed that there is a secular foundation for secular law, i.e. a *natural* foundation for rational thinking.

In the more recently 'enlightened' view it has had to be realised that this cannot be the case. There is nothing foundational in any presumed atheological view of human existence that necessarily points to rationality. Instead, it has had to be realised that rationality is by necessity a product of particular peculiar theological assumptions, or we could say that it is a product of taboo.

Because rationality itself is dependent on notions of taboo, it follows that

all necessary conception of sin cannot be based on rationality alone. That is to say that there must be restraints on human behaviour based on other than rationally founded notions of right and wrong. That is that certain restraints on human behaviour must be rooted in fear of taboo. Taboo hence is not a primitive, illogical, counterproductive and entirely negative aspect of human existence. Rather, it is a foundational necessity. If indeed it is so, then criticism of the Bible on the grounds that its prescriptions are rooted in illogical taboo (cited above) is baseless.

We are being forced towards the realisation that far from being a primitive and unnecessary vestigial part of human thinking and existence that we have thankfully more recently displaced with reason, taboo is a necessity. Yet taboos by definition appear, humanly speaking, to be arbitrary. Indeed humanly speaking they are arbitrary. In other words—following the mechanical worldview—their origin could be considered to be based on chance. In such a case whatever are the benefits of modern life, those benefits are rooted in chance.

Alternatively, and this seems a much more reasonable option to consider—the right kinds of taboos are those that are put in place by God. In this case, the foundations for the 'good life' in human terms, being theological in turn, means that the foundations for effective majority world development must be rooted in 'correct' theology.

Our discussion above has thrown up many challenges to what has become conventional and secular thinking that I do not go into in this essay. I encourage other scholars to pick up and to explore some of these challenges.

⁵⁷ Berman, *Law*, 165.

⁵⁸ Frazer, *Folk-lore*, already alluded to above.

⁵⁹ Alvin Plantinga, 'Reason and Belief in God' 16-93 in: Plantinga, A., and Wolterstorff N., (eds.) *Faith and rationality: reason and belief in God* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 62.

VI Summary and Conclusion

The modern era has brought attacks on traditional Christian theology, including an undermining of the notion of the centrality of sin to human society. Modern anthropology made an effort to separate itself from Christianity, and missionaries, themselves were profoundly influenced by modern thinking. Anthropology, a counter-cult movement, tried to turn the tables on missionaries, considering them unhelpful kill-joys, an accusation glaringly misguided in light of the booming church in Africa and the majority world today.

African Christianity is very aware of taboo, often having redefined ‘sin’ as taboo. African and other contemporary developing nations imitate western secularism, while through re-interpreting it as taboo’ism, causing much confusion. Development waxes and wanes in Africa due to a foundational deception related to the above still being perpetuated by anthropologists and others. The strength of churches confirms the foundational need for something more than ‘secularism’.

The euphoric celebration arising from recent supposed discovery of happy-contented non-western people free of burdens of *sin* was in hindsight misguided. Collective dealing with sin and guilt, i.e. the church, seems after all to be beneficial. Westerners coming across as gods with immunity to witchcraft, continue to amaze the majority

world. At the same time Westerners’ contributions to non-western cultures are often assessed as unclean or dirty.

Whereas in the West secularism is supposedly rooted in reason, it can be understood in Africa as rooted in taboo. Reason, that attempted to separate taboo from sin, has itself been found to be rooted in taboo. Taboo, then, is not only a primitive vestige, but also a contemporary necessity.

A key question is—whether God or whether chance underlies taboo. If it is merely chance, then it could seem that human society is in a sad position indeed. This implies that there is no authoritative basis on which to choose between taboo-options, thus seeming to condemn humankind to ongoing division, dissension, unhappiness, and strife. If on the other hand God is and has been there to orient people through a minefield of a maze of possible taboos, then there is hope.

In conclusion we can say that removing taboo-sin from the category of sin seems to have led to the rise of secularism on the back of an apparently sensible objectively-rooted anthropology (and philosophy). The effects of this misunderstanding, that was glibly welcomed by many, continue to reverberate in the global community. The apparent solution is to return to a position, in academia and beyond, of theological rather than supposed ‘objective’ hegemony.

The Catholicity of the Church: Reconciling the call for Exclusive Doctrine and Inclusive Community

Jonathan Cole

I Introduction

Ecclesiology presents theologians with some of their most challenging theological problems. There are several tensions inherent in the historical and sociological reality of the church that are difficult to resolve theologically: divine presence and human community, order and charism and the one and the many. None is more intractable and arguably more urgent than the issue of disunity which is a product of the tension over the one and the many.

The New Testament places an emphasis on Christian unity. Paul wrote to the church at Rome: ‘May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Rom 15:5).¹ Yet

there are today, by some estimates, as many as 34,000 distinct Christian denominations, worshipping the one God in a cacophony of competing voices.² The church’s disunity today demands theological explanation and solution.

A central challenge for any discussion of the church in a multi-denominational context is that almost anything one says of the church understood in its universal sense will be true of some, but inevitably be false with respect to others. Therefore, in order to investigate what lies at the heart of the tension between the one and the many in the church, I propose to briefly survey four different traditions with their distinctive approaches to the issue of

¹ NRSV accessed through Mantis Bible Study iPhone App.

² It is impossible to know with any certainty just how many denominations are in existence. A lot also depends on how one defines denomination or on one’s ecclesiological typology. This figure is taken from Paul D. L. Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 7.

catholicity: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Reformed and Pentecostal, and make observations arising from the survey. This ought to provide a robust enough basis upon which to draw some conclusions about the tension of the one and the many that might hold for all churches.

1. Roman Catholic

Roman Catholic ecclesiology is built on the understanding that Jesus Christ founded the church in his lifetime.³ Jesus willed that his apostles' successors, in the form of bishops, 'be shepherds in His Church' until 'the consummation of the world'.⁴ Each bishop serves as 'the visible principle of unity and foundation of unity in their particular church'.⁵ Together, in the college of bishops, they express the 'variety and universality of the People of God'.⁶ Furthermore, Jesus instituted a 'permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion' by placing Peter, and by extension his successors in the form of the bishops of Rome (Popes), at the head of the college of bishops.⁷ The pope, as the Vicar of Christ, exercises 'full, supreme and

universal power over the Church'.⁸

In Roman Catholic ecclesiology, catholicity is a gift of the Holy Spirit. But it is a gift 'distorted by the presence of sin...in the members of the church individually and collectively'.⁹ As a consequence, the catholicity of the church must be understood eschatologically, as both an 'affirmation of fact and an invitation to hope'.¹⁰ Avery Dulles describes the catholicity of the church as 'a present, though imperfect, reality'.¹¹ This imperfection arises by virtue of the fact that many Christian communities and churches are not currently in communion with Rome. While Roman Catholicism acknowledges the existence of 'elements of sanctification' and 'truth' outside its visible structures,¹² the 'fullness' of catholicity can only be realised in communion with Rome.¹³

2. Eastern Orthodox

The Eastern Orthodox Church also understands Jesus to be the founder of the Church.¹⁴ It also shares the Roman Catholic view that the episcopate forms the centre of a Christ-ordained order and principle source of unity within the body of Christ.¹⁵ However, it repudiates

³ Michael A. Fahey, 'Church', in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives Volume II*, ed. Francis Shussler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 16.

⁴ 'Dogmatic Constitution of the Church—Lumen Gentium', The Holy See, 21 November 1964, accessed 7 October 2013, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, LG III, 18.

⁵ LG III, 23.

⁶ LG III, 22.

⁷ LG III, 18.

⁸ LG III, 22.

⁹ Fahey, 'Church', 43.

¹⁰ Fahey, 'Church', 43.

¹¹ Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 168.

¹² LG III, 8.

¹³ Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 21.

¹⁴ Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 245.

¹⁵ John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 8.

the idea that the bishop of Rome has been endowed with a divinely-ordained special office of unity and authority over other bishops.¹⁶ In its stead, it emphasises a conciliar model of authority and unity, which is understood as the ideal reflection of the Trinity.¹⁷ While the Eastern Orthodox Church rejects the infallibility of the Pope, it subscribes to the view that the church as a whole, particularly through its ecumenical councils, is infallible.¹⁸

This difference in part stems from the Eastern Orthodox Church's emphasis on the Trinity as the model for understanding the relationship between the one and the many in the church, in contrast to Roman Catholicism's greater emphasis on the Christological foundation of the church, with an episcopal successor leading the church in Christ's place.¹⁹ Kallistos Ware argues that 'just as each man is made according to the image of the Trinitarian God, so the Church as a whole is an icon of God the Trinity, reproducing on earth the mystery of unity in diversity'.²⁰ John Zizioulas argues that a truly Trinitarian view of the church consists of both 'communion' and 'otherness', just as it does in the triune God.²¹

Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology maintains that the church exists in the form of both visible and invisible

congregations—those worshipping on earth here and now and the saints and angels in heaven.²² The visible and invisible congregations make up a single, undivided and 'continuous reality'.²³ This concept rests on the idea that the 'unity of the Church follows of necessity from the unity of God'.²⁴ Thus, while the church may appear divided to the human mind, it is in reality united from God's perspective.²⁵ The united church—both visible and invisible—consists of churches in communion with the Eastern Patriarchates (and those past who were similarly in communion).²⁶

This marks an important departure from Roman Catholicism. While claiming to represent the fullest embodiment of the one holy, apostolic and catholic church, Roman Catholicism accepts that the catholicity of this church is in some way broken and imperfect because of schisms and splits. This allows it to recognise an imperfect and less than full working of God's grace in Christian communities not in communion with Rome. For example, it is able to recognise in the Eastern Orthodox Church 'true sacraments'.²⁷

The Eastern Orthodox Church, on

¹⁶ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 243.

¹⁷ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 245.

¹⁸ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 252.

¹⁹ This is at least how things look to Eastern Orthodox theologians. See John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Great Britain: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), 123.

²⁰ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 244.

²¹ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 4-5.

²² Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 247.

²³ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 247.

²⁴ Alexei Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, Orthodox Christian Information Center, accessed 7 October 2013, http://orthodoxinfo.com/general/khomiakov_church.aspx.

²⁵ Khomiakov, *The Church is One*.

²⁶ Khomiakov, *The Church is One*.

²⁷ 'Decree on Ecumenism—Unitatis Redintegratio', The Holy See, accessed 8 October 2013, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html, UR III, 15.

the other hand, maintains that it alone is the embodiment of the ‘ideal Church’ as a visible, concrete reality on Earth.²⁸ Consequently, it finds it more difficult to make the same concession made by Roman Catholicism at Vatican II. Kallistos Ware serves to illustrate this difficulty. He argues in *The Orthodox Church* that it is possible for individuals not visibly part of the church to be saved, but they ‘must *in some sense* be a member of the Church’ (original emphasis).²⁹ In what sense, Ware says, ‘we cannot always say’.³⁰

3. Reformed (Calvin)

Jean Calvin shares the Eastern Orthodox distinction of a visible and invisible church, albeit with some important differences that lead him to very different conclusions about the issue of Christian unity. Calvin believes the visible and invisible churches are not in fact united. He believes the invisible church consists of the true saints, past and present, and that this church represents the one holy, catholic and apostolic church.³¹ However, unlike Eastern Orthodoxy, Calvin believes this church is known only to God.³² Thus, while it is a concrete reality, it is not visible or knowable. The visible church, according to Calvin, consists of the earthly community of all who profess faith—

saints and hypocrites alike.³³ Calvin describes the position of the invisible church within the visible church as ‘a small and despised number, concealed in an immense crowd, like a few grains of wheat buried among a heap of chaff’.³⁴

Calvin further argues that believers are obliged to ‘cultivate...communion’ with the visible church.³⁵ He believed cultivating communion with the visible church necessitated tolerating members who might not ultimately enjoy membership of the invisible church:

For it may happen in practice that those whom we deem not altogether worthy of the fellowship of believers, we yet ought to treat as brethren, and regard as believers, on account of the common consent of the Church in tolerating and bearing with them in the body of Christ. Such persons we do not approve by our suffrage as members of the Church, but we leave them the place which they hold among the people of God, until they are legitimately deprived of it...Thus we both maintain the Church universal in its unity, which malignant minds have always been eager to dispersever...³⁶

Calvin believed that God placed a higher value on Christian unity than on purity of membership. He deemed those who turned their backs on the visible church (i.e. the radical reformers of his day) ‘deserters of religion’.³⁷

²⁸ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 248-249.

²⁹ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 251-252.

³⁰ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 252.

³¹ Calvin doesn’t use the language of ‘one holy, catholic, apostolic Church’, but this is the implication of his argument about the ‘invisible’ Church. Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, accessed on iBooks, *Book IV, 1:2*.

³² Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 1:2.

³³ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 1:2.

³⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 1:2.

³⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 1:7.

³⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 1:9.

³⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 1:10.

4. Pentecostal

Trying to say anything definitive about Pentecostal ecclesiology is difficult for two reasons: the ‘bewildering pluralism’³⁸ within the movement and its lack of articulated ecclesiology.³⁹ For the purposes of rounding off our comparative survey, we will investigate the perspective of just one prominent part of the Pentecostal movement: the Assemblies of God.

For the Assemblies of God, the church can be understood only when placed within the larger and more important context of the ‘kingdom of God’. Interestingly, the official website of the Assemblies of God USA offers no statement that might be considered a doctrine of the church or an ecclesiology. It does, however, offer a ‘position paper’ on the kingdom of God adopted by the General Presbytery in 2010.⁴⁰ This is already an important departure from the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Reformed (Calvin) ecclesiologies with their emphasis on the church—visible, invisible or otherwise. The paper does not specifically address the issue of catholicity. But the implications of the views articulated therein about the kingdom of God and the church have important bearing on

the issue.

The Assemblies of God defines the ‘kingdom of God’ as ‘the sphere of God’s rule’, against which fallen humans participate in a universal rebellion.⁴¹ By faith, obedience and regeneration through the Holy Spirit humans can ‘become a part of the kingdom and its operation’. Crucially, the kingdom is present ‘whether or not people recognise and accept it’.⁴² The kingdom is both ‘a present realm’ and ‘a future apocalyptic order into which the righteous will enter at the end of the age’.⁴³ Thus, ‘the reality of the ultimate Kingdom is qualified’—to be fulfilled only at the eschaton.⁴⁴ The current age, located as it is between the ‘first and second advents of Christ’ is understood as consisting of a ‘forceful spiritual confrontation between the power of the Kingdom and the powers that dominate the world in this present age’.⁴⁵ The latter refers to satanic powers.

Jesus Christ is nowhere described as the founder of a ‘church’. Rather, the kingdom is described as being ‘present...in the person and acts of Jesus during the time of His Incarnation’.⁴⁶ As such, Jesus might be thought of as the ‘inaugurator’ of the kingdom rather than the founder of the church.

In contrast to the magisterial reformers’ dictum that the church is present where the word is preached and the sacraments duly administered,

³⁸ Walter J. Hollenweger, ‘An Introduction to Pentecostalisms’, *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education* 25 (2004): 130.

³⁹ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 13.

⁴⁰ ‘The Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God USA, 9–11 August 2010, accessed 8 October 2013, http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/pp_downloads/PP_The_Kingdom_of_God.pdf.

⁴¹ ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 1.

⁴² ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 1.

⁴³ ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 2.

⁴⁴ ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 2 (the paper is inconsistent with respect to the capitalisation of ‘kingdom’).

⁴⁵ ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 2.

⁴⁶ ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 2.

the Assemblies of God believes that: ‘where His Spirit is, the Kingdom is present’.⁴⁷ The paper makes an important ontological distinction between the kingdom and the church:

The age of the Spirit is the age of the Church, which being Spirit-created is also the community of the Spirit. Working primarily through the Church but without being confined to the Church, the Spirit continues the Kingdom ministry of Jesus himself.⁴⁸

Thus the purpose of the church is to serve the kingdom, which existed before the Church and will continue to do so after the Church has finished its ‘work’.⁴⁹

II Observations

This survey has briefly explored four very different views on Christian unity. These can be summarised as follows:

- a) Roman Catholicism’s imperfect or partial catholicity where churches in communion with Rome enjoy the fullness of catholicity and those that are not have the potential to enjoy some of the fruits of grace;
- b) Eastern Orthodoxy’s perfect catholicity whereby its invisible component is united with the visible component manifested as a concrete reality in the form of bishops in communion with the Eastern Patriarchates;
- c) Calvin’s reformed view of an invisible communion of saints

⁴⁷ ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 2.

⁴⁸ ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 3.

⁴⁹ ‘Kingdom of God’, Assemblies of God, 4.

known only to God in communion with the visible Church where the wheat and chaff are mixed together; and the

- d) Pentecostal (Assemblies of God) view of the church entailing spirit-filled membership of the kingdom of God, furthering the work of the kingdom against the forces of Satan.

While this survey is far from exhaustive—in either its depth or breadth—it does provide a basis for several important observations about the tension of the one and the many in the church, particularly as it relates to the plurality of denominations or traditions.

1. The origin of the church

Firstly, one’s understanding of the origin of the church is an important determinant of how one will probably approach the issue of Christian unity. Two views in this regard are evident amongst the traditions surveyed above: Christ as founder of the church (Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) and church as the ‘outcome’ of Jesus’ ministry (Reformed and Pentecostal).⁵⁰ The belief that Jesus founded the church naturally leads to belief in a divinely-given church order. This in turn opens the door to the belief that the church, if founded and ordered by Jesus, must be understood as being perfect in some way. It is then very difficult to accept any church that doesn’t

⁵⁰ For ‘outcome’ see Walter J Hollenweger, who says the ‘church can...be considered as being the outcome of the work of Jesus, but *not of his foundation...* (original emphasis)—‘The Pentecostals’, trans. R. W. Wilson (London: SCM, 1972), 428.

acknowledge the authority of this order, for they can only have fallen into error or worse.

On the other hand, if the church is an outcome of Jesus' ministry, then order is not divinely ordained, or at least not in the institutional sense, and the yardstick for measuring the validity of order will more likely be its efficacy in furthering the church's mission, the 'outcome' of Jesus' ministry. Thus Calvin could focus on the Word and the sacraments and reform Catholic Church order. Similarly, the Assemblies of God can focus on the presence of the Spirit as the mark of the kingdom of God and appropriate secular language for its order—general superintendent, non-resident executive presbytery, by-laws, for example—without any embarrassment.

In short, if Jesus is the founder of the church, church order necessarily becomes central to the question of catholicity. If he is not understood as the founder of the church, then order is not central, but the church's mission is. As a consequence, both sides have found it difficult to compromise as order and mission are constitutive of their respective churches.

As an aside, the fact that the two oldest traditions which both accept Christ as the church's founder can still be in schism today over exactly what Christ instituted amply demonstrates that this view is no guaranteed path to unity. Similarly, understanding the church as the 'outcome' of Jesus' ministry has not led churches in this camp to unity. There is disagreement over precisely what that mission is and ought to look like today.

2. Norms

Secondly, there is disagreement about what is normative for the church in scripture and early church history. This is at least partly a product of the nature of the New Testament. The vast majority of material about the church comes from pastoral letters written to real historical churches in real historical settings. As a consequence, it is not always easy to discern what elements are to be read as normative for the church in all places at all times and which elements are merely descriptive of the church at a particular juncture in its historical evolution, i.e. historically contingent. Both elements are present in the text (the *kat'oikōn* churches mentioned in the New Testament, for example, are surely not normative for church order today).

The Eastern Orthodox Church takes the period of the New Testament and the first seven ecumenical councils as normative for the church. The Roman Catholic Church takes these ecumenical councils and adds subsequent councils, and in reality, what the Pope determines on matters of doctrine today. Calvin begins and ends with the Word (i.e. the text of Scripture) and today's Pentecostals take Jesus' ministry and mission as normative, and in reality whatever is validated by the Holy Spirit today.

3. The 'two ways'

While disputes over the origins of the church and what is normative for it are important explanatory factors for why and how different traditions have emerged, there is actually a much deeper and more significant cause at the heart of the tension over the one

and the many in the church. This is that the church, contrary to the thrust of much of the ecumenical movement, is in fact by its nature exclusionary.

Christianity presents all people with the starker of choices: heaven and hell. It offers no real alternative. The *Didache*, one of the earliest Christian texts, opens with this choice: ‘There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways.’⁵¹ Lesslie Newbigin was aware of this truth when he wrote that ‘...the New Testament... surely assumes that there is a real people of God in the world...and that it makes the most awful and ultimate difference conceivable whether you are inside or outside of that place’.⁵²

This dichotomy forces the church, in whatever shape or form it takes, to wrestle with the issue of where the boundaries of its membership end, and where those of its mission begin. If there is no boundary between Christian and non-Christian, then the church ceases to exist as an intelligible concept and is incapable of being a concrete social reality. But drawing the boundary is no easy matter.

Part of the problem stems from the fact that while the New Testament presupposes a simple dichotomy between those belonging to Christ, and those belonging to the world, it neither presupposes nor speaks to a situation of a plurality of churches all believing to

be truly the body of Christ, yet not in communion with one another. This is not because the New Testament church was in some way perfect or ideal—it was beset by many of the same types of disputes that create disunity today: doctrine, discipline and authority, for example. Rather, it is because followers of Christ then still formed a single community (church), despite their factions, leadership cliques and doctrinal disputes.

Simply put, communion had not yet broken down in the way that it subsequently came to be. This is why the term ‘catholicity’ makes no appearance in the New Testament. It simply wasn’t an issue. It doesn’t make its first appearance in Christian literature until Ignatius’ letter to the Church in Smyrna in the early 2nd century, a time when the unity of the church was coming to be tested more seriously and gravely, and without the benefit of living apostles.⁵³

At the edges the boundary between Christian and non-Christian remains clear. Atheists, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims are not members of the church. They don’t claim to be, nor do they desire to be, and nor do Christians regard them so. But the boundary is much more opaque and difficult to define with respect to those who profess to be Christians, yet belong to churches that are not in communion with each other. In this sense, the issue is one of intra-tribal conflict rather than inter-tribal conflict. The issue of the status of ‘other’ Christians who do not belong to one’s own tradition is an

51 ‘The Didache’, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. and trans. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 345.

52 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 56.

53 I have taken this dating of Ignatius’ letter from Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 170.

inescapable question and challenge for all Christians.

The central difference between the four ecclesiologies investigated above is that they all draw the boundary in a different place with respect to those who claim to be Christians and to belong to the church. The result is that each of the four excludes different groups of Christians, according to their own distinctive ecclesiology.

Some do this explicitly, as in the case of Eastern Orthodoxy. Others are less explicit, such as the Assemblies of God, whose ecclesiology implies that those who aren't members of the kingdom of God are with Satan. Its definition of membership in the kingdom of God (e.g. testimony to an experience of the 'new birth' and baptism in water by immersion)⁵⁴ excludes even many evangelicals, let alone members of the traditional episcopal churches.

Even Calvin, who was very conscious of the need and difficulty of drawing a boundary around the people of God, produces just as exclusive a church as the others. His communion with the visible church is a mere concession for the present age until the real, hidden church, with a very definite boundary of membership, is separated from the transient visible church, most of whose members will end up at the destination of the second path outlined by the *Didache*.

The problem is not boundary drawing *per se*, for this is unavoidable—it

is forced by the exclusionary nature of the Christian message with its 'two ways'. Rather, the issue is that Christians, churches and traditions cannot agree on where the boundary between the two ways is located in the concrete world. This is a key reason for schisms, splits and the proliferation of churches and traditions.

III The Central Challenge

The central challenge for the church in the ecumenical age is to strive for common understanding on where to locate the boundary of membership in the body of Christ, and to do so in the most inclusive way possible without sacrificing the integrity of the message. Miroslav Volf understood this problem. He argued in *After Our Likeness* that the problem of the one and the many consists in the 'relationship between *exclusivity and inclusivity*' (original emphasis).⁵⁵

The need to draw a distinction between Christian and non-Christian, uncertainty about where to draw the line between the two, a multi-denominational Christian context and a secular culture that celebrates pluralism all work together to create an acute theological tension between the one and the many for all Christians today. As a consequence, the church confronts something of a paradoxical mission. It must preach the most exclusive of messages, yet do so with the most open of hearts, while modelling the most inclusive of communities.

⁵⁴ 'Recommended Bylaws for Local Assemblies'. The General Council for the Assemblies of God, August 2009, accessed 11 October 2013, http://ag.org/top/about/recommended_ch_bylaws.pdf, Article VI, Section 1.

⁵⁵ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), 262.

Review Article

God's Mission through Suffering and Martyrdom: The Korean perspective of Paul (Young Kee) Lee

Roy Stults

I Introduction

There is growing interest and a consequent production of new materials in the area of persecution studies, evidenced by the increasing amount of articles, monographs, and university and seminary classes in this particular area of study. Paul (Young Kee) Lee¹ caught the vision a decade ago. In 1999 his dissertation on 'God's mission in suffering and martyrdom' was accepted by Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Its publication in book form is in process. This essay will try to give a synopsis of his book.²

1. Instrumental suffering

The work is both a biblical theology and an historical overview of the role of suffering and martyrdom in the accomplishment of God's mission to and for the world. A key idea and a key word in Lee's writing is the word 'instrumental' by which, Lee means that something (in this case suffering and martyrdom) is God's method in accomplishing his mission. It is the determining element, the pivotal action that brings about the desired result. Suffering and martyrdom are instrumental to God's plan and method of carrying out that plan.

Indeed, it is not *a* method God uses; it is *the* method. It is inescapable and indispensable. If we are to be part of God's mission to the world, we will personally have to participate in this

1 Paul (Young Kee) Lee who received a doctorate in missiology (USA) is a missionary with the One Mission Society, serving in East Asia. His is also Professor of Missiology and Dean of School Development at America Evangelical University. He serves as an Adjunct Professor at Hope International University. He has served as a youth pastor, missionary to Thailand, Senior Pastor, and Educational Pastor.

2 The concluding chapter has been published

under the same title in C. Sauer & R. Howell (eds.), *Suffering, persecution and martyrdom: Theological reflections* (Religious Freedom Series, 2). Kempton Park/ Bonn 2010, 215-256.

method. We become instruments in God's work and we will have to suffer, to some degree, to accomplish this work, in a manner worthy of God. It is built into the *modus operandi*. It is the *modus operandi*.

To a certain degree this sounds somewhat superficial—God had a plan to rescue mankind and he chose a procedure that would best accomplish that goal. It sounds so pragmatic and practical. It goes, however, much deeper than that. In fact, it is not impersonal, like a well functioning factory that has an automated mechanical process or procedure to produce a product. It is deeply personal, involving God himself.

The Son of God becomes incarnated in order to personally experience suffering and death on behalf of mankind. It is integral to his mission and this mission reflects the very nature of God. It is redemptive suffering and it is quite personal and profound because it involves the person of Jesus Christ, who is both God and man. The followers of Christ do not participate in redemptive suffering in the same manner or degree that Christ did but, as a part of the redemptive process to rescue mankind and bring about reconciliation, they will have to suffer as well in completing God's mission. It will require sacrifice and self-denial, and can only be brought about by many trials and tribulations.

2. The suffering of the Korean church

What makes Lee's book unique and invaluable is the extensive section on the role of suffering, sacrifice, and martyrdom in the context of the trials and tribulations of the Korean church in

that nation's struggle for freedom to be an independent, sovereign nation and how that factors into the subsequent growth of the church. Korean Christians suffered greatly both as patriots and as believers since the forces they faced were bent not only on destroying the church but the nation as well.

In many ways the historical struggle continues in the North, where a large portion of Korean people suffer because of a political ideology that prides itself on being the most repressive persecutors of the church on the planet. What is ironic about this is that Pyongyang was once the centre of Christianity in all of Asia and the faith flourished there in a manner unseen in any other area of Asia at the time. This was so despite its initial struggle with Christianity due to the early Korean culture's disdain of any interference from the outside. Once the Hermit Kingdom, as it is known to Koreans, was forced open, it embraced Christianity with unparalleled zeal.

However, in just a few short decades, the church was suppressed, forced underground, and virtually decimated by another zealous force that occupies much of northern Asia. Instead of bringing peace and prosperity, it has brought only pain and poverty. The suffering of Korea and Koreans continues, representing a long history of repression and oppression.

Lee intertwines the theme of the instrumentality of suffering and martyrdom with the one bright aspect that has emerged as a result of this suffering—the tremendous growth and zeal of Christianity in South Korea. Lee's conclusion is that this could not have happened as it has without the tremendous price many Korean Christians

paid to serve God and to free their country.

3. Organization of the book

Like a good scholar, Lee lays out his argument in sections, building layer upon layer, climaxing with impassioned stories of courage from his native land. He then applies his observations and conclusions to the realms of missions and missiology, spiritual warfare, and the contemporary practices of ministry. It becomes, above all, a superb practical theology that is both pastoral and missiological, which, in reality, should never be divorced from each other.

II Redemption through Suffering

The first layer of his argument sets up the context which must be recognized to understand clearly God's redemp-tion actions in history. Although we are familiar with the story of the Fall, Lee introduces it in order to present the important theme and truth of suffering as a means of countering, in fact destroying, the effects of the Fall. The abuse of genuine free will given to humanity by God and the deliberate choice to disobey led to God's judgment upon mankind, primarily but not entirely confined to a break in intimate relationship with the Creator. This was, of course, precipitated by Satan, who lured Adam and Eve away from God and set up doubt in their minds so that they rejected God's authority.

Lee explains the prior existence of evil through a brief description of Satan and his origin and subsequent rebellion. The result of the Fall of mankind through Satan's deception is spiritual

death, accompanied by physical death and decay in the cosmos. Things have gone awry and as long as sin and death prevails, they will continue in that state. But they will not always prevail.

The introduction of suffering and death into the picture becomes the very means by which God will profoundly respond to and resolve this tragic situation. In essence, God takes upon himself the very punishment he has meted out and uses it to ultimately defeat the source and cause of the rebellion, evil itself. Suffering becomes the means or instrument for defeating the cause of suffering.

1. The redemptive suffering of Christ

When one observes the ministry of Christ, it becomes clear that he saw salvation accomplished through suffering as the means of ultimate healing, a multi-dimensional healing of the social, spiritual, and physical realms. Through raising people from the dead and through his own resurrection from the dead, salvation and healing would go so far as to defeat death itself. In the meantime, even the righteous must suffer.

Lee specifically seeks to dispel the idea that we must have a fatalistic attitude toward sickness as if it was something we must only endure. We should actively seek to alleviate suffering due to sickness. Like Christ, it is a way of defying the effects of evil in this world. Suffering, however, is something we are likely to encounter as we seek to do his will in a real world with real dangers and with a powerful enemy.

To a certain degree, understood correctly, this suffering can have a

redemptive quality. Christ's suffering was totally redemptive in every way. The suffering of the followers of Christ is redemptive only in the sense that it is a part of the process that will bring about the actual redemption of persons, as well as the cosmos. It was a pattern for Christ's life and ministry and it will be the pattern of ministry for his followers as well. It also defines the manner in which God's mission is to be carried out—not by the sword but by enduring unjust pain and humiliation.

2. The pain of God

Dr. Lee draws on many theologians, East and West, and introduces to us many names with which we would not be familiar. One name that is familiar is that of Kazoh Kitamori. There is a certain irony, if one viewed it from the world's perspective, in using him since he was a Japanese theologian and anyone remotely familiar with Korean history would know that Japanese Imperialism was the cause of much pain and suffering to Koreans, especially Korean Christians. However, in true Christian fashion, Lee expresses no personal animosity toward a Japanese brother.

Kitamori's writings on the pain of God are enlightening to read if not controversial in light of the longstanding debate in the church over the passability or impassability of God. Lee writes:

Kitamori argues that our pain is actually healed when it serves the pain of God. This is what Jesus meant when he said to His disciples: 'For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it' (Mt 16:25).

Our wounds would be healed when they serve our Lord's wounds (1 Pet. 2:24)³

Lee chides the western church somewhat when he quotes John Stott's statement that 'the place of suffering in service'⁴ is seldom taught today. It is something that the persecuted church understands well and the western church needs to relearn. In all fairness, it is something the whole church, East and West, North and South, must never forget.

3. Suffering a part of the call of the Apostle Paul

Dr. Lee then addresses suffering in the ministry and missionary work of the Apostle Paul, which is especially relevant for missions and missiology. The vision that Saul experiences on the road to Damascus profoundly alters the course of his life and history as well. He is confronted by Jesus who specifically asks why Saul was persecuting him!

As a Jewish scholar, Saul would not have put the concepts of messiah and suffering together. Saul's experience with the messiah who suffers is reinforced by the explanation of his missionary calling, which requires him to suffer to fulfil God's will for his life. His quick mind put it all together and he did not hesitate to acknowledge that Jesus was his Lord. There is never a hint in his writings that the prediction and reality of his sufferings ever

³ Y. K. Lee, *God's Mission in Suffering and Martyrdom*, PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999, 53.

⁴ John R. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 322.

deterred him from his mission. It went along with the territory. It was the chosen method by God to reach the world.

Lee mentions Simon Kistemaker's five reasons why Paul was the perfect choice to be a missionary.⁵ The question is not addressed as to why Paul would have to suffer as a missionary. He had no special qualification although some might argue that he had caused suffering so this was a part of his redemption. That may have been in Paul's mind.

In reality the question is not asked nor is this particularly mentioned because he had no special qualification or even any special calling. In fact it is a part of the calling of anyone called to be a missionary. If suffering is a part of the plan for all servants of God, then Paul would be no exception. He was a servant of the risen Christ. He would suffer.

III A Theology of Martyrdom in the Early Church

This truth is born out in the subsequent decades and centuries of church history. Persecution would be sporadic, sometimes intense, sometimes spotty, but always lurking and ready to spring forth somewhere in the life of the church. Dr. Lee gives a rather extensive picture of persecution of the early church and the development of the concept of martyrdom. The term 'martyr', which of course means witness, begins to accrue the added meaning of one who dies for witnessing. Stephen is

called a martyr. Before long the term is used to refer almost exclusively to one who dies for the faith.

Lee takes the discussion one step further by introducing the idea of a theology of persecution in the writings of Clement and Tertullian. The question that is central to this discussion is the issue of volunteer martyrdom. There were those who were so zealous in their faith that they sought martyrdom, some to the point of provoking their enemies to kill them so they could attain the high honour of being killed for their faith. Lee writes:

Suffering and death at the hands of the persecutors were regarded so highly that there were many Christians by the second century who actually courted their own deaths in the name of the 'martyrs'. This phenomenon of voluntary martyrdom cannot be said to have been a temporal sentiment of the day because it continued for more than a hundred years. This movement of voluntary martyrdom not only astonished the persecutors, but also the spread of voluntary martyrdom had become so alarming to many thoughtful church leaders that they gradually developed a sharp distinction between the courted martyrdom and the right kind of martyrdom that came as a result of persecution.⁶

Tertullian seems to speak in favour of volunteer martyrdom while Clement speaks against it, since to him it appears to be suicide. Clement also talked about a phenomenon that occurred when people were facing martyrdom. He called it a 'defense', an *apo-*

⁵ Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, nd), 341.

⁶ Lee, *God's Mission*, 229.

logia, a special ability given to martyrs by the Holy Spirit to bring people into the kingdom.

IV Persecution and Church Growth in Korea

A theme that was briefly introduced earlier in the book is re-introduced more fully at this point. Lee is concerned to discover what connection there might be between persecution and church growth. He feels that to a certain degree it is insensitive to talk about church growth in the context of the subject of persecution. Dr. Lee's sense of propriety compels him to think that it seems to be cold calculation at a time when people need to have a deep reverence for the topic of dying for the faith.

The question is raised by the misunderstood statement by Tertullian that the blood of Christians who die for the faith is the seed from which the church experiences greater growth. Lee notes that martyrdom does often strengthen the church, but that at times it has destroyed it in certain locations.

For those who wish to know and understand the phenomenal growth of the church in South Korea, Lee has given a robust explanation of the beginnings of Christianity in Korea. In what was obviously God's providential timing, Protestant missionaries arrived on the shores of Korea precisely when Koreans were the most receptive. Lee delves into the historical factors that converged to bring about one of the most dramatic and unpredicted episodes in mission history. A country that consistently repelled any foreign influence eventually embraced Christianity in a way unparalleled in Asian

church history. For Koreans, Christianity has never entirely been viewed as a western religion.

Equally as astounding is how the centre of Christianity in Asia, the city of Pyongyang, went from being filled with Christians to being the place of great persecution, disappointment, and death as communism almost totally rooted out Christianity from that city.

The first wave of severe persecution was experienced much earlier by Catholic Christians who had denounced ancestor worship. By the time Protestant missionaries arrived, about a century after the Catholic missionaries, there was little central government support for Confucianism so persecution of those who denounced ancestor worship was far less strenuous.

The next threat to Christianity came from Japan's attempt to annex Korea, which it did occupy from 1910 to 1945. It was a time of severe suffering for Korean Christians particularly. It gave birth to the March First Movement—a patriotic movement initiated and sustained by Christians. They based their idea of national freedom on Christian faith. Lee recounts in detail this very significant era in Korean history.

The issue during the Japanese occupation was Shinto Shrine worship, which was defined and promoted by the Japanese government as a patriotic duty but was seen by many Christians as idolatry. Many Christians died as a result of their refusal to participate in the so-called patriotic ceremonies. It caused a rift in the church in Korea because some Christian leaders taught that the worship was to be seen only as a patriotic ceremony and not as a religious act. However, many Christians made no such distinction and paid for

it with the forfeiture of their life. Lee reflects on this era:

The Korean church found a great encouragement in the sufferings of Christ and heartily welcomed the message of the gospel of salvation. From the Bible they knew how God had rescued the Israelite people from the bondage of slavery under the Egyptian empire. They loved Moses who led the Israelite people out of that bondage to freedom and independence in the land of promise. They nurtured their love and concern for their beloved nation with the word of God. They believed that the God of the Bible was on their side in their suffering and groaning under the Japanese control.⁷

In some ways the division of the church at this time set a pattern for Christianity in Korea because church division has been a serious problem in the church since that time. This was truly one negative result of persecution.

Not long after the end of Japanese occupation, the Korean War broke out and Christians went through another horrific period of severe suffering. It lasted only three years but it was devastating, both to the country and to the church. The communists of North Korea and China, with their vast armies, sought to crush the church while forcing the population to submit to communist rule. The brutal atrocities of that era are well chronicled and documented, as is the heroic and courageous witness of Christians who died for no other reason than their allegiance to Christ. Most of the Christian churches

were in the northern part of the country (now North Korea).

After recounting many stories of suffering and martyrdom in the context of the Korean War, Lee steps back and reflects on this suffering and martyrdom of Koreans from a missiological perspective. It was not only a time of shame and humiliation, but also a time of glory and honour because it truly contributed to the future growth and stability of the church in Korea. He writes:

The persecution of the Christian churches by the Russian Communists was a cruel and merciless one and the Korean War was tragic for Korea. We cannot explain such persecutions and tragedies. But what is significant from a missiological point of view is that God can use such historical events providentially for the advancement of the gospel. Despite suffering and martyrdom, the church in South Korea surprised the world by its rapid growth and missionary zeal.⁸

V Conclusion

The third and last part of Lee's book seeks to bring all the themes together.

1. Suffering as a part of mission theology

He presents the evidence for thinking that the instrumentality of suffering and martyrdom needs to be a part of contemporary mission theology. 'The pattern of suffering and death,' he writes, 'is to be reflected in the life and

⁷ Lee, *God's Mission*, 312.

⁸ Lee, *God's Mission*, 333.

ministry of His disciples'.⁹ When Jesus affirmed this to his immediate disciples, he was also affirming it for all subsequent followers. And it proved to be the case in the immediate years following the death of those who walked with Jesus.

It has been a reality throughout the ages of the church and is a reality in many parts of the world today, in spite of the fact that many in western countries might try to deny it. Lee utilizes the writings of Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, as well as others, to support his contention that persecution is not confined to the past, as much as we may wish this was true.

Lee advocates a theology of martyrdom to be a part of Christian theology and goes into some detail about the theological arguments that have denied the passability of God. Lee believes that it was the concepts of *apatheia* (not having emotion or passion) and *autarkeia* (being self-sufficient) attributed to God that have left western theologians generally (with some notable exceptions) uninterested in the idea of suffering as being a part of God's mission to the world. His conclusion is that

all these theologians missed the missionary dimension of Christian martyrdom which is supposed to reflect the pattern of suffering and death of Jesus Christ in God's mission. Their focus on the suffering of God results in neglecting the aspect of Christian suffering and martyrdom, so that they have little understanding of this kind of instrumental suffering in fulfilling God's

mission.¹⁰

Lee asserts that

the phenomenon of persecution cannot be explained exhaustively as exclusively the work of Satan. As we have seen in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the breaking out of persecution can have divine as well as human factors. In fact, by faith we can even say sometimes God has a higher purpose in allowing persecution among His people.¹¹

To follow Jesus in self-denial and cross-bearing will mean suffering and martyrdom. This is the 'Principle of the Cross', Lee says. 'However, not all Christians are called to suffer and die for the sake of Jesus' name in the literal sense, even though they are called to live by the principle of the cross in their life and witness in this world.'¹²

Lee has an extended discussion of the meaning of the cross for his disciples in that he talks about the concept of 'escapability'. A person must choose to carry the cross of Christ; therefore, it is possible to escape this responsibility. However, to do so has negative consequences. On the other hand, when one hears the call of God and is moved by it, the response is to obey. 'When the will of God in suffering and martyrdom is revealed and confirmed to the Christian martyrs through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, they are willing to obey God's calling to suffer and die for Christ's sake.'¹³

¹⁰ Lee, *God's Mission*, 349.

¹¹ Lee, *God's Mission*, 349.

¹² Lee, *God's Mission*, 359.

¹³ Lee, *God's Mission*, 377.

2. Suffering and spiritual warfare

Lee then discusses the very practical issue of spiritual warfare in the context of instrumental suffering in the process of fulfilling God's mission. Spiritual warfare was present in Christ's ministry and it is a part of ours as well, even when we are not fully aware of it. Warfare implies suffering, and suffering as a part of spiritual warfare is no exception. We recognize early on that we are weak before the powers that seek our demise and we must allow God to display his power through us to defeat the enemy. It is paradoxical but God's power is displayed through suffering. As we sacrifice and suffer for him, he is able to defeat our enemy. It is been proven true on many occasions,

not the least through the suffering of the Korean church.

3. Instrumental suffering for ministry

Finally, instrumental suffering is essential for ministry. Lee is advocating a different understanding of ministry from what is generally understood today. His understanding of ministry includes all followers of Christ who comprise a *holy* priesthood who intercede for the lost as well as the found. Instrumental suffering must become the mode of Christian witness of the church before the world in order to be truly faithful to the mission and method of God's mission to the world.

Will All be Saved? An Assessment of Universalism in Western Theology

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Colin Brown, Senior Professor of Systematic Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary,
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Book Reviews

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**From Pentecost to Patmos: Acts
To Revelation**

Craig L. Blomberg

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*Reviewed by Greg Goswell, Christ College,
Sydney, Australia*

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com.au)*

Craig Blomberg is Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, Colorado. This is the companion volume to his widely-used textbook, *Jesus And The Gospels*. It covers *The Acts of the Apostles, Letters (Pauline And General)* in chronological order, as far as it is possible to discover) and the book of *Revelation*. This book started as lecture notes and later became a correspondence course. The focus is on surveying the structure and contents of the various Bible books, solving the main exegetical cruxes and dealing with the key matters for contemporary application.

Blomberg notes the challenge of working out what is normative in the

narrative of *Acts*, which is where the discovery of main themes and repeated patterns of behaviour are of importance. He shows Luke's impressive credentials as an accurate historian and provides a 50-plus page commentary on *Acts*, full of wise judgments and pertinent points of application. In turning to the *Letters*, Blomberg sketches Paul's life and ministry, especially his Jewish heritage and upbringing, his encounter with the Risen Christ on the Damascus Road (that was both his conversion and his commissioning), and theories of what happened to Paul after Acts 28.

He is right to reject pseudonymity (false attribution of authorship) as acceptable to 1st Century Christians or to countenance the idea that people would have thought it honest to write in Paul's name, and therefore he rejects the common critical theory about who wrote *Ephesians* and the *Pastoral Epistles*. In the face of claims by proponents of the 'New Perspective', Blomberg insists that the great apostle did combat Jewish legalism. He shows that closer examination of Paul's writings reveals that he knew much about the earthly life of Jesus, even though this was not the focus of his teaching in his letters. We are not to set Jesus against Paul, who was his most gifted and effective follower!

Blomberg helps us to correlate the visits of Paul to Jerusalem in Acts and the record Paul gives in *Galatians*. He also helpfully refers to Anatolian folk religious background to explain Paul's allegory of the two mountains in Galatians 4. He shows that the theme of thanksgiving dominates *1 Thessalonians*. In both *Letters To The Thessalonians*, Paul instructs about the return of Christ, showing that 'faithful living in the present always remains the first priority'. Paul's Corinthian correspondence, as summarised by Blomberg, counters misguided views about Christian maturity and the abuse of Christian freedom. He argues for the unity of *2 Corinthians*, especially that chapters 10-13 are in their proper place (despite the sudden change of tone). Blomberg is perceptive in seeing Paul's *Letter To The Romans* as a major turning point in his career. It is his most systematic exposition of the gospel, for the Roman Church had not yet met him. Blomberg opts for the traditional view of a Roman imprisonment as the place of origin for the *Prison Epistles*, (*Philemon*, *Colossians*, *Ephesians* and *Philippians*). He insists that *Ephesians* is genuinely Pauline and was perhaps a circular letter to several churches (including Laodicea).

He likewise sees the *Pastoral Epistles* as by Paul, who perhaps gave his secretary greater freedom in the process of final composition than he did in the drafting of some of his other letters. In the process of explaining the content of the *Pastorals*, Blomberg makes sensible, practical and sensitive application to contemporary church life. He deals with the old theory that James contradicts Paul's teaching about faith and justification, showing that James and Paul agree that the faith that saves leads to a transformed lifestyle. Blomberg shows that, for James, this takes the form of

deeds of mercy. Blomberg points out that US Evangelicals have been slow to see that, and for more on this topic, see his earlier book, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches* (IVP, 1999). He sees Hebrews as written to a Jewish-Christian house church in Rome, pre-64 AD, under the growing threat of persecution by Nero. This is why the Hebrews definition of faith emphasises the need for endurance. He is even-handed in his interpretation of the famous 'warning passages' of Hebrews, and he is right to make the point that both Arminians and Calvinists agree that the ultimate test of faith is that it perseveres.

The main strengths of Blomberg's introduction are his up-to-date survey and summary of scholarly opinion (as detailed in his footnotes), the seriousness with which he takes the claims made by the Bible authors, and his focus on the biblical text, with the bulk of this book being commentary on the actual text with application. I recommend this as a thoroughly reliable introduction and survey of the New Testament writings.

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Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues

Michael W. Goheen

Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014
ISBN 978-0-8308-4047-2
Hb., pp 444, indices

Reviewed by David Turnbull, Tabor Adelaide, South Australia

In recent years there has been a noticeable growth in publications and textbooks in English and from western contexts that seek to provide a founda-

tion and framework for global mission. Michael Goheen (PhD), who is Theological Director and Scholar-in-Residence in Missional Theology at the Missional Training Centre in Phoenix, Professor of Missional Theology at Newbiggin House of Studies, and the Jake and Betsy Tuls Professor of Missiology, Calvin Theological Seminary, has made his third book a contribution to this literature pool.

The aim of this book is to encourage the church to rethink its missional calling, especially in light of the changing paradigm of mission as a result of the breakdown in the unidirectional model of mission of the West going to the majority world, the changing context of mission, and to ensure that missiology is contextual and addresses the burning issues. Mission for him is built around the traditional Lausanne slogan of 'The Whole Church Taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World'.

This readable, well organized work attempts to start conversations, and encourages further research through footnotes throughout the book, and at the end of each chapter there are suggested readings, reflective discussion questions and essay topics. In addition, the key insights and quotes are highlighted in dialogue boxes and the different tiers of headings support the awareness of logic in an argument.

This 444 page book has eleven chapters arranged in three parts. The first part provides a fresh reflection on Scripture, theology and mission. The second part re-assesses the way that the history of mission is interpreted and understood, and assesses the state of play of the global church in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Pacific. The third part examines at least six significant contemporary issues regarding the task and direction of mission—holistic

mission, contextualization, missiology of western culture, urban mission, the missionary encounter with the world religions, and frontier missions.

An undergirding evangelical missiological framework is evident and prominent, and is reflected in the influence of key missiologists such as David Bosch, Lesslie Newbigin and Christopher Wright. The core traditional components are present and reinforced such as missio-dei, the biblical narrative of God's engagement with the nations, the holistic nature of mission, the place and role of the three members of the Trinity, missionary calling of the church, and the importance of the Kingdom of God.

So what is the distinctive contribution that this book makes? Firstly, the recognition of the relationship between the past and the contemporary context for mission is present and results in a healthy, broader, integrative understanding of the nature of mission. The theological reflection contributes to this and means that there is a balance between the present context for mission with the biblical, theological and historical understanding. The whole scope of the discipline is explored. Most textbooks focus on history and theology, but Goheen devotes nearly fifty percent of the book to applications for the contemporary context arising from theology and history. As a result future missional encounters and activity should be stimulated.

Secondly, Goheen models and engages with the ecumenical breadth of mission studies and the breadth of interpretation based on the different traditions and the mission heritage. He recognizes that each tradition has a contribution to make to the corporate understanding of mission.

Thirdly, there are some significant,

valuable and practical insights about the contemporary context arising from the global survey and these are reflected in the third part of the book. These include the five elements of a faithful approach to contextualization, the 18 characteristics of the 'contrast community' (or counter-culture community) in western culture, the elements of the agenda for urban mission, the valid distinction between cross-cultural partnerships and cross-cultural mission, and the problems hindering fresh mission endeavours, and the need to identify and evaluate the missionary encounter.

Fourthly, the survey of the global church also highlights the current needs and challenges facing the Christian communities in each region, including the West, which need to be considered in the priorities for mission in those regions. In the process he encourages missiologists to display the insights of the non-western churches to the theological academy.

In providing an overview of global mission, Goheen could have strengthened his contemporary reflection further in several areas. He acknowledges the multicultural and multinational nature of the global church and could have

drawn more from contemporary examples beyond the US, and included input from majority world theologians and missiologists. The spiritual dynamics associated with the missionary task could have been highlighted further in light of the acknowledged growth of Pentecostalism, including discussion on spiritual warfare and prayer and the role of the Holy Spirit.

The nature of the Christian cross-cultural messenger for this changing missional context could have been developed. There are core skills, knowledge and attitudes that aid the ongoing missional expansion of the church such as cultural intelligence, humility and partnership skills. Home church members also need to be encouraged to be advocates, welcomers and prayer warriors.

Certainly these potential gaps do not impact on the influence of the book. The invitation to be educated further in all facets of mission in the context of the big picture is strong for all members of God's family, especially those engaged in church-based mission. The result is an admirable resource for all those who seek to understand the mission work they engage in or support.

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The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness
by Gary Tyra (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011) ISBN 978-0-8308-3949-0
Pb, pp 206.

The Holy Spirit in Mission is an inspiringly spirited and prophetically charismatic book based on the connectedness of missional ecclesiology and pneumatology. It provides a biblical, practical and theological dynamic with a simple and profound challenge to each individual and the universal church regarding the missionary spirit. It marks a new frontier in evangelical learning with the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit. The author who is Associate Professor of biblical and practical theology at Vanguard University of Southern California, suggests that one needs to discern and renew the witness value of the Spirit in a post-Christian era to the world.

The book outlines five key connections that emerge from its very title. Chapter one presents an overview of the Bible, drawing a connection between the coming of the Holy Spirit into people's lives and the phenomenon of prophetic activity (Spirit-inspired speech and action). Chapter two focuses on the connection between prophetic activity and missional faithfulness stressing practices such as evangelism (*kerygma*), edification (*koinônia*) and equipping (*diakonia*) via the means of both prophetic words and works, to re-present the presence and power of the Risen Christ. Chapter three argues that the remarkable spread of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity around the world in recent years can be attributed to the dynamic of prophetic activity taking place in the lives of church members. Chapter four explores the why and the how of evangelicals living in the post-Christian West, offering a different way of being a Christian by suggesting contextualization and representation as the goal of missional communities. Chapter five seeks to answer the question: 'What can the church do in order to encourage evangelicals to embrace the missional ministry?' by presenting basic steps that can be taken by local church leaders and denominational officials, such as a focus on kingdom, incarnational and attractional approaches to ministry, and leaders functioning in the power of the Spirit.

The book as a whole offers a panoramic view of the Spirit in mission. It is a valuable tool for missiologists and anyone interested in contemporary mission theology. The author is associate professor of biblical and practical theology at Vanguard University of Southern California with specialization in theology, spirituality and ministry formation.

Reviewed by Romero D'Souza, Mumbai, India.

STUDIES IN EVANGELICAL HISTORY AND THOUGHT

The Life of God in the Soul. The Integration of Love, Holiness and Happiness in the Thought of John Wesley

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Glen O'Brien, Associate Professor of Church History and Theology, Booth College, Sydney

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Thomas A. Noble, Professor of Theology, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, USA

David B. McEwan is Director of Research, Nazarene Theological College, Brisbane, Australia; and Director of the Australasian Centre for Wesleyan Research

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