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THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE 21st CENTURY:
CRITICAL CHALLENGES/CRITICAL OPPORTUNITIES
(12th ICETE CONSULTATION)

WORLD EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP
Theological Commission

Theme:

Theological Education in the 21st Century: Critical
Challenges/Critical Opportunities (12th ICETE Consultation)

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Editorial

In this issue, we present some papers from the 12th International Consultation for Theological Educators held 11-15 September 2000 All Nations Christian College, Ware, England. We are pleased to work with our sister body, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), who sponsored this consultation. The theme was *Theological Education in the 21st Century: Critical Challenges/Critical Opportunities*. More than sixty people from all parts of the world registered for the gathering.

Our first paper, *ICETE—Vision to be Embraced*, was the keynote address for the Consultation. In it the ICETE Director, Dr Dieumeme Noelliste of Jamaica, paints a confident picture of the potential for cooperative and integrated evangelical theological education on the global level. This is followed up by Adriaan Stringer's discussion of one of the prime objectives of any theological training course, spiritual formation. His insights should prove useful for anyone grappling with the difficulties facing this obvious but often elusive function.

We move on then to examine the philosophical and theological context in which seminaries and colleges must operate in the contemporary post-modern world. Dr Rolf Hille, chair of the WEF Theological Commission, presents the concluding parts of his essay on the transition to Post-Modernity, the introduction to which was published in our April 2000 issue. This paper, and the *Reflections* on its implications for theological education which fol-

lows, emphasizes the importance of understanding trends and developments in fundamental assumptions and worldviews.

Other speakers at the conference included Dr Ramesh Richard, RREACH International (*Theological Education in the 21st Century*), Dr David Burnett (*The Revolution in Educational Technology and Theological Education*) and Dr Christ Wright, (*The Way Forward*) (both from the host college). There were other papers, panels and practical sessions on such topics as ethnic identity, North/South issues, self-study, libraries and educational quality. We hope to present some of these papers in later issues as they become available.

ICETE is a global community, sponsored by seven continental networks of theological schools to encourage international contact and collaboration among all those concerned for excellence and renewal in evangelical theological education world-wide. The continental networks sponsoring ICETE which embrace hundreds of schools, are: Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA), Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges [North America] (AABC), Asia Theological Association (ATA), Association for Evangelical Theological Education in Latin America (AETAL), Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA), European Evangelical Accrediting Association (EEAA), South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges (SPABC).

The main aims of ICETE are to promote the enhancement of evan-

gical theological education worldwide, to serve as a forum for contact and collaboration among those involved in evangelical theological education for mutual assistance, stimulation and enrichment, and to provide networking and support services for regional accrediting bodies for evangelical theological education worldwide. It also seeks to facilitate among its member bodies the enhancement of their services to evangelical theological education within their regions, and to foster the quality and the academic recognition of evangelical theological education worldwide through the accreditation services of these bodies.

Since its founding ICETE has organized a series of international consultations on vital issues affecting theological education. These have been held about every two years in such locations as England, Malawi, South Korea, USA, Cyprus, Germany and Thailand.

Many of the papers from these consultations have been published in the ICETE's monograph series: *Evangelical Theological Education Today*. Titles include *Evangelical Theological Education: An International Agenda*, edited by Paul Bowers; *TEE Come of Age*, edited by Robert Youngblood; *Excellence and Renewal in Theological Education*, edited by Robert Youngblood; *Perspectives on the Future of Theological Education*, edited by Roger Kemp; and *Text and Context in Theological Education*, edited by Roger Kemp.

The most important publication is the *Manifesto on the Renewal of Theological Education*, available in several languages. It has become a standard reference resource for discussion and implementation of

renewal in evangelical theological education worldwide. The original Manifesto was issued in 1983. The slightly revised edition of 1990 is now the official version, and is available in several international languages.

ICETE collaborates with projects of the *Task-Force for Evaluation of Credentials from Overseas Theological Schools* (TECOTS), a joint committee representing the full spectrum of North American evangelical tertiary education, which furnishes the admissions officers of its constituency institutions with guidelines for evaluating overseas credentials. ICETE maintains a Library Development Program, offers services for the recognitions of accreditation and other consultative services.

ICETE's history is rooted in the emergence of networks of evangelical theological schools in the third world during the late 1960s and early 1970s. From among these new associations came a call in 1978 for some means by which they might be in regular contact and collaboration at the international level. The WEF Theological Commission agreed to sponsor the project, and ICETE was formed in March, 1980, at meetings in Hoddesdon, England. In the years since its founding ICETE has become an established international forum for dialogue and cooperation among evangelical theological educators.

ICETE has also taken a leading role in fostering renewal and excellence in evangelical theological education worldwide, and it has sought to ensure that the interests and concerns of theological education are effectively voiced within the larger venues of evangelical cooperation globally. ICETE's membership now covers all major regions of the world.

The officers of ICETE are **Chair**: Dr. Dagfinn Solheim (EEAA), Oslo, Norway; **Director**: Dr. Dieumeme Noelliste (CETA), Kingston, Jamaica; ICETE has had three **General Directors** during its history: Dr Paul Bowers (1980-82); Dr Robert Youngblood (1983-88); Dr Roger Kemp (1989-97). Presently Dr Paul Bowers (ACTEA), Cape Town, South Africa is serving as ICETE's international **administrator** on an interim basis, pending the appointment of the next ICETE General Director.

ICETE operates within the framework of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF). Originally it was known as *International Council of Accrediting Agencies for Evangelical Theological Education (ICAA)*. The present name (the acronym ICETE is pronounced 'eye-set') was adopted in 1996 to accent the purpose of the community rather than its principal constituents. Its vision is *Strengthening theological education through international cooperation*.

ICETE welcomes enquiries about its activities and the work of its member bodies. It can be contacted at PO Box 64, Muizenberg 7950, South Africa; fax: 27-21-788-1662; email: <icete@sim.org.za> or <dagfinn.solheim@nlm.no> A number of resources and further details about the organization and its member bodies can be found on its web site at

<www.worldevangelical.org/icete.htm>

Other supporting papers in this issue exemplify and develop some of the concerns expressed by the Consultation papers. For example, Dr Dennis Ngien's study of Abraham Heschel's theology of divine pathos points to another sample of the way philosophical beliefs impact on the Christian faith, which parallels those explored by Dr Hille in his treatment of the transition to Post-Modernity. Dr Charles Metteer argues for an integrated spirituality that goes outside the classroom and sanctuary by considering the relationships between faith and everyday work. Finally, we are taken into the African scene via the first century cultural context by Dr Olu Alana. He suggests that the process of contextualisation so extensively carried out in the history of Western European Christianity needs to be emulated in his own culture as well. He points out that there is much to learn from the example and teaching of Jesus who interacted with the dominant cultures of his day to advance the kingdom, successfully avoiding harmful accommodation as he did so. Dr Robert Lang'at's paper is an excellent presentation of how this principle of contextualisation has been relevant to the involvement of Christian missions in higher education in Kenya.

David Parker, Editor.

ICETE: Vision to be Embraced

Dieumeme Noelliste

Keywords: Theological Education, globalisation, manifesto, cooperation, interdependence, ecumenism, discipling

Introduction

Sometime ago, while attending a seminar in South America, I informed one of the participants, with whom I was having dinner, of my plan to attend this consultation. When, in response to his query about the sponsorship of the event, I made mention of ICETE, he jokingly corrected me by saying 'Oh, you mean Ice Tea?' In a very defensive retort, I

insisted that my pronunciation of the acronym was correct, and explained that, although we were going to meet in London, ICETE is not about drinking tea, but about the setting of the eye on a goal, the starting at a target, the striving toward an aim.

Following that dinner time conversation, I turned my attention to preparing for this presentation. Without too much probing, I discovered that my interpretation was correct. It was not the result of a novel, fanciful and eisegetical exercise. Of a truth, underlying our organization is a vision that motivated its creation, explains its *raison d'être* and, as I will argue shortly, justifies its continued existence.

Dr. D. Noelliste, the Director of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) is President of the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology and of the Jamaica Theological Seminary. He has served as chair of the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association. He grew up in Haiti and studied law at the State University of Haiti. He holds the MDiv degree of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill. and the PhD in theology of Northwestern University. He has pastored churches in USA and in the Caribbean, and is the author of the WEF Theological Commission Monograph (No 10), *Toward a Theology of Theological Education*. This address was delivered at the 12th International Consultation of Theological Educators, sponsored by ICETE and held at All Nations Christian College, Ware, UK, 11-15 September, 2000.

I. The ICETE Vision

But what is the ICETE vision? I am prepared to stand corrected if I am mistaken, but my examination of the record suggests that ICETE's throbbing heartbeat is the enhancement or the strengthening of evangelical theological education through international cooperation and networking. Its self-understanding is that of 'a

1 ICETE Constitution, Art. III, para. 1.

forum for contact and collaboration'¹ for providers of theological education. The purpose of such collaboration is 'mutual assistance, stimulation and enrichment'.² From the outset ICETE's premise seems to have been this: if evangelical theological educators coordinate their efforts, evangelical theological education can experience greater strength and therefore achieve greater excellence.

This vision of strength and excellence through cooperative labour seems to have been collectively designed and corporately owned. The 'mechanism for ongoing contact'³ was hammered out by the Council's five charter members at its very first Consultation. Commenting on that inaugural meeting Paul Bowers boasted:

For the first time ... there now exists an international medium for communication, coordination, collaboration among schools, programmes, agencies and associations anywhere in the world concerned with evangelical theological education.⁴

Zenas Gerig, who represented the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA) at that historic consultation, was no less jubilant. For him, the formation of ICETE was a very 'significant development'⁵ in theological education. And for Gerig, the Council's significance stemmed precisely from its self-assigned role, namely, to be 'a strategic forum for ongoing cooperation among evangelical theological edu-

cators and associations worldwide, and a catalyst for excellence in theological education'.⁶

The theme of collaboration for mutual enrichment was later picked up by the widely acclaimed *Manifesto for the Renewal of Evangelical Education* and the very important vision statement adopted by the ICETE Consultation at Moorlands College, Sopley, UK in 1996. The Sopley document saw collaboration as a major commitment of ICETE, and the *Manifesto* listed it among the essential requirements for the renewal of evangelical theological education. With passion, the *Manifesto* urges the ICETE constituency to eschew the isolationist mentality and pursue cooperation and partnership. Article 12 of the *Manifesto* reads:

Our programmes of theological education must pursue contact and collaboration among themselves for mutual support, encouragement, edification and cross-fertilisation. We are at fault that so often in evangelical theological education we attend merely to our own assignments under God. Others in the same calling need us, and we need them. The biblical notation of mutuality needs to be much more visibly expressed and pragmatically pursued among our theological programmes. Too long we have acquiesced in an isolation of effort that denies the larger body of Christ, thus failing both ourselves and Christ's body. The times in which we serve, no less than biblical expectations, demand of each of us active ongoing initiatives in cooperation. This we must accomplish by God's grace.⁷

From all that has been stated so far, ICETE's understanding of its man-

2 ICETE, *Strengthening Theological Education Through International Cooperation*, (Brochure), (1999) Also, *ICETE Constitution*, Art. III, para. 2.

3 *ICETE News*, (January 2000), p. 3.

4 *ICAA Compendium* 1988, p. 3.

5 Zenas Gerig, *The Story of the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association* (Kingston: Christian Press, 1993), p. 47.

6 Gerig, *Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association*, p. 47.

7 *ICAA, Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education* 2nd ed. (1990), pp. 8, 9.

date and vision could not be more clear. Indeed, one could say that if a clear vision alone were sufficient for success, ICETE would have no shortage of it. But things don't work that way. Despite the Council's clear grasp of where it is heading, in recent times the sailing has not been smooth. The truth is, that by themselves, visions never accomplish anything. To achieve results, visions must not only be conceived, but also sustained and pursued. To be converted from potentialities into actualities, dreams must be kept alive and acted on. Dreams only dreamt will forever remain dreams.

II.

These considerations have led me to the view that the imperative of the hour is not necessarily the reinventing of a new vision, but the embracing and the pursuing of the old with a fresh commitment and renewed vigour. When we consider what is happening around us and the opportunities that lie ahead of us, the conclusion that we are driven to is the need for a deepening of cooperation with ICETE, not a reversion to a do-it-alone paradigm. There are several factors that ought to motivate us in this direction.

The first that begs consideration is the spirit of the time. Many names can be given to it, but I have chosen to call it the 'pull toward togetherness'. Of late it looks as if, all of a sudden, the dwellers on planet earth have been awakened to the idea that it is not good for humans to be alone. In various parts of the world, people are finding all sorts of ways to forge closer ties among themselves, with a view to increasing their strength. The last decade of the twentieth century could arguably be called the

decade of power bloc formation. In that short span of time we have witnessed the coming into being of the European Union, the formation of the North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the emergence of the 'Pacific Rim', and the creation of the World Trade Organisation.

In Latin America and the Caribbean we have seen the creation of a multiplicity of economic sub-groups. There is the 'group of three', consisting of Mexico, Columbia and Venezuela, the Southern Cone Group, spearheaded by Argentina, the Andean Pack Group, the Association of Caribbean States which brings together the fifteen Caribbean Community countries, the non-independent territories and all the South American countries washed by the Caribbean Sea. And what shall we say of the business world with its recent practice of merging already gigantic businesses into mega-companies?

But the urge for togetherness does not end there. We have seen it also in the realm of education. With the advent of distance learning, several First World institutions are teaming up with partners in the Two-Thirds world in an effort to extend their 'market'. In the Christian and theological education sub-sector, there is movement as well. In the latter part of the 1970s, several Reformed institutions came together and formed what later became the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE). Their overriding purpose is the 'promotion of communication and cooperation among scholars engaged in Christian

education and research',⁸

The early 1990s saw the establishment of an umbrella group of an even wider scope. It is the broadly ecumenical body known as the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI). Closely linked to the World Council of Churches, this global network sees itself as meeting the need for closer cooperation among theological institutions 'at the local, national and regional levels'.⁹

It is evident that both internationally and regionally, the mood is for *rapprochement* not isolation, interdependence not independence, cross-fertilization, not separation. ICETE saw this twenty years ago and displayed great foresight in challenging the evangelical community to embrace the cooperative vision. Time has proved this to be right. What is needed now is the intensifying, the deepening, and widening of what was initiated some twenty years ago.

One may quite correctly argue that to show that a thing is timely does not necessarily mean that thing is to be endorsed, let alone embraced. A thing may be in vogue, but if it does not meet a felt need, it can reasonably be set aside as superfluous. This is the question: 'Is working together for the provision of quality theological education for the benefit of the global church a superfluous notion?' I think not. And there are several arguments that could be advanced in support of this negative reply, but I will focus on one, namely, the present need of the church.

⁸ IAPCHE, *Christians and Higher Education in Eastern Europe: Proceedings of the 1993 Debrecen Regional Conference*, Sioux Centre, IA, (Dort College Press, 1993), p. 21.

⁹ World Conference of Association of Theological Institutions, *Constitution and Bylaws*, (1992), p. 1.

It is common knowledge that at the moment the majority of evangelical Christians live in the Two-Thirds world. In 1996 the percentage was estimated at 70%. With the rapid growth of the church in the developing and the former Eastern bloc, the need for theological education in these parts of the world has increased considerably. Speaking for Latin America, Emilio Nunez and William Taylor identify the 'shortage of biblically trained leaders'¹⁰ as one of the serious problems faced by the church. I suspect that the situation may not be much different in other parts of the world. I heard of an African denominational leader who, faced with a lack of workers to disciple new converts, was thinking of asking his church members to stop evangelizing!

There is no doubt that the need for biblically-trained disciplers to nurture the growing church is greater than it has ever been in modern times. A vast army of Christians need to be trained at all levels and in various ways: formal and informal, face to face, and at a distance. Meeting this pressing need requires a cooperative effort of immense proportion. All of our resources must be efficiently deployed. Otherwise, the harvest will be spoilt for lack of care. In the case of Latin America, Nunez and Taylor found that inefficient use of resources due to lack of cooperation is one of the major impediments to the delivery of the theological education. Listen to their lament:

Too many of (the Latin American institutions) operate on specific and limited theological platforms. Either they are non-Pentecostal and hence close their doors to

¹⁰ Emilio A. Nunez and William D. Taylor, *Crisis in Latin America: An Evangelical Perspective*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), p. 165.

seventy-five percent of evangelicals, or they promote Pentecostal distinctives to the point that the non-Pentecostal does not feel comfortable. These centers carry their ministries largely unrelated to each others.... Most of these institutions remain independent of global associations such as (ICETE).¹¹

The point being made here is that, given the great need facing us, partnership must not be seen as a luxury item that we may purchase if we can afford it. Rather, it is a basic necessity that we must secure if we are to meet the nurturing needs of a fast growing global church.

There is a third factor that I think needs to be given full weight as we consider responding to the beckoning of the ICETE vision of strength through partnership. The factor is feasibility. This year, the Council commemorates twenty years of existence and service to global evangelical theological education. A review of these years will reveal failures, unmet expectations and unreached goals. Indeed, the Sopley vision statement candidly acknowledges that 'ICETE continues to fall short of its mandate and potential'.¹² And as we look ahead we see uncertainties and daunting challenges.

And yet the story cannot stop there. If the review exercise is to be fair and objective it must include the achievements as well—and there are some notable ones! Mention must be made of the twelve consultations that provided the platform for fellowship, cross-fertilization, and the discussion of pertinent issues relating to our task. The review must highlight the several publications which continue to be widely used by theological educators the world over. It ought not to

overlook ICETE's valuable input in the support, strengthening and establishment of regional bodies and associates. Through these and various other services, the council has contributed significantly to the strength and quality of evangelical theological education throughout the world.

Modest as they are, these successes must be recognized and heartily celebrated. They form part of our God-given heritage for which we must be grateful. Modest as they are, they serve as reminders of the fact that the vision is achievable. Yes, in changing times, we need to take a hard look at our priorities and methodologies. But the message of these past achievements is this: with the participation of all, we can, with God's help build a stronger organization which will in turn be better able to serve us.

I will be the first to admit that there is an element of pragmatism in the reasons advanced above for closer cooperation within our organization. However, I want to be clear that even if we were to discard all these factors with all their attendant benefits, it would still be incumbent upon us to work closely together as we seek to fulfil our vocation of leadership training for God's church. For when all is said and done, our strongest motivation for togetherness is our partnership in the gospel. The gospel to which we adhere demands our unity. It calls for the removal of all dividing walls between us and a commitment to a mode of relationship based on solidarity, mutual assistance and interdependence.

It sees us as belonging to the same company, being accountable to the same Master and striving to achieve the same objective. If for no other reason than this, let us rise and embrace the collaborative vision.

11 Nunez and Taylor, *Crisis*, p. 166.

12 *A Vision For ICETE's Future*, (1996), p. 1.

Spiritual Formation

Adriaan Stringer

Keywords: Spirituality, holiness, Pietism, Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism, surrender, spiritual exercises, accreditation

Introduction

The *raison d'être* of our Bible schools will always remain: *the formation of all-round, mature Christians*, ready for service in the church at large. Maturity is expressed in three aspects: in what a person is, in what a person knows and in what a person is *able to do*.

Adriaan Stringer is coordinator of the European Evangelical Accrediting Association and deputy administrator of ICETE. He has had a variety of missionary posts including supervisor for Evangelical Missions schools in the then Dutch New Guinea, missionary school inspector in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and national director of CAMA in the Netherlands. He was Academic Dean of the Bvgian Bible School, Heverlee, Belgium and Director of the Dutch Evangelical Bible School (now Evangelical Theological College), Veenendaal, Netherlands. He holds BS (Theology and Missions) at Nyack College, NY, and MA (Missiology) from Grace Theological Seminary, Ohio. He has written prodigiously for a mission magazine and schools in which he served, as well as producing diverse textbooks for internal use in these same schools. This address was delivered at the 12th International Consultation of Theological Educators, sponsored by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) held at All Nations Christian College, Ware, UK, 11-15 September, 2000.

In the evaluation of our success, the second aspect is the easiest to be measured. An experienced teacher has a battery of tests and exams at his disposal. The third aspect is far more difficult. Yet, practical assignments, feedback from internships and personal observations yield a lot of information.

The first aspect, however, is the most important and at the same time the most difficult to verify. How do we evaluate human character? How do we estimate the strength of one's personal relationship with Christ? How do we foster this relationship in the first place? Why is the impact of the gospel on some Christians no more than skin-deep? Can we train someone into spirituality?

This is the more pressing since, at least in western Europe, more and more schools abandon the practice of housing their students in dormitories. Everybody lives on his/her own as 'externs', so the impact of the group and of the school is greatly weakened, for better or for worse.

Many of our students come to our schools because they feel spiritually insecure. They desire to be moulded into the plan of God for their lives and they tend to delegate the respon-

sibility for the outcome to the school. A school gets high praise if 'It brought me closer to God', and criticism centres mostly around disappointment in this regard!

We live in a time in which existentialist functionalism plays an important role. 'Religion is what religion does' was the conclusion of E.E. Evans-Pritchard.¹ Evans-Pritchard was a cultural anthropologist who moved away from the evolutionist approach of his day to a more functional approach. The burning question is no longer, 'Where does religion come from?', but 'How does it make me feel?', or 'What is the out-working in our lives and in society?' Many people realize that the religion of Jesus should do more in their inner beings.

We notice a deep sense of frustrated idealism in many religions. Maryse Condé² gives the memories of her hero concerning his professor in Islamics:

There are three levels in the life of Faith. The first is for the masses. Its standard is the Law. The second is for those who learned to master their shortcomings and who took the path towards Truth. The third is the privilege of only a few. Those who have reached this degree of perfection, contemplate God in Truth and in the Light that is beyond all colours. God's truth flowers on the fields of Mystical Love and on Love for the neighbour.

Her hero will go for the highest level! He fails miserably in the turmoil of animistic Africa, being destroyed by the slave trade, colonialism, Islam, Christianity, but most of all, by his

own carnal passions.

How many newcomers come to our schools, wide-eyed with expectation of the influx of power and determination that will flow through them, just by attending a Bible School? How many drop out too soon, confused and sometimes scarred by shattered illusions?

A walk through history

Of course, our problem is not new. Let us look at a few historical approaches to Christian spirituality and the ways to reach it in the hope of finding some pointers for spiritual formation today.

A. Jewish spirituality³

Jewish spirituality, preferably called 'holiness', is achieved by the performance of God's will, according to the opening formula of some Jewish blessings: 'Blessed are You Lord our God, King of the Universe, who makes us holy through the performance of His commandments, and who commands us to...', after which follows a reference to the 613 commandments listed in the *Sculchan Aruch* of Joseph Caro (1488-1575).

The Mishnah says: 'This is the way of the Torah! A piece of bread with salt you will eat, a ration of water you will drink, upon the ground you will lie, a life of hardship you will lead, and you will labour in the Torah. If you do this "happy shall you be"—in this world and in the next.'

In Jewish spirituality, there is never a question of union with God, since there is no place for incarnation in Jewish thought, but rather of

¹ Douglas Davies, 'The Study of Religion', in *Eerdman's Handbook to The Worlds Religions*, (Lion, 1982), p. 13.

² Maryse Condé, *Ségou* Vol. 1, Dutch ed., (Amsterdam: Muntinga, 1990), p. 119.

³ Lionel Blue, 'Jewish Spirituality', in G.S. Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, (London: SCM, 1983), p. 226.

'cleavage to God' by the performance of his will. This concentration on the Law greatly overrules feelings, personal relationships and sensations of ecstasy.

Questions: *Diligent study of Scripture (the Law) no doubt has a formative impact on the student. Sometimes we assume that the analysis of the Bible text is in itself all the spiritual formation we can offer. Do we, or should we, combine the study of Scripture with some physical hardship? Is a stern application of some set of (sometimes legalistic) Christian rules for life conducive to true spirituality?*

B. Johannine spirituality

Entirely different is Johannine spirituality. It fully coincides with John's concept of 'eternal life'. Eternal life means life in Christ, which makes it deeply sacramental. John views all Christian experience as deriving from a unique conjunction⁴ of the material and the spiritual in the Word made flesh (John 1:1-14). Eternal life is in Jesus and we have to abide in him. The mystery of reciprocal abiding is love (1 John 4:16). A life full of Christ finds its expression in worship, service and mission.

Questions: *Keywords : surrender to, and abiding in, Christ. Can these be fostered and 'measured' in our college activities? What do we do to ascertain that a student is 'born again'? Do we have the right to delve into the inner life of our students? And to 'meddle with' their moral life and social relations?*

⁴ S.S. Smalley, 'Johannine Spirituality', in G.S. Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, (London: SCM, 1983), p. 230.

C. Pietist spirituality⁵

The Pietist movement has had a deep influence on our understanding of spirituality. Trond Enger sees its origin in a reaction against the orthodox Lutheran interpretation of justification as a forensic act. Sin was condemned, the sinner was saved, but sin remained, so life continued as it always had been. Pietism claims that re-birth of the sinner is the awakening to a life free from the power of sin. Re-birth means a total change, a participation in the divine nature, an experience of God's merciful action of saving the world and now me. The result has to be visible, mainly on the ethical level. Spiritual maturity is seen as the ability to fight and overcome actual sin. The ultimate salvation can be lost through evil deeds but is not deserved by good deeds.

In the fight against sin, the human will is not broken since it is badly needed in the battle, but the *Eigen-Wille* has to be renounced and made one with the will of Christ. This process requires a constant analysis of self and of one's motivations.

Questions: *The same questions as under Section B, above, come again to mind. Do we ourselves believe and experience that the re-birth enables us to fight and overcome sin? Do we make a 'Christian life-style' a prerequisite for graduation? Should this be stipulated in our Manuals for Accreditation?*

D. Watchman Nee⁶

Although chronologically out of order, we now jump to Watchman

⁵ Trond Enger, 'Pietism', in G.S. Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, (London: SCM, 1983), p. 300.

⁶ Gleaned from Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1977).

Nee. His strong emphasis on the tripartite nature of the person is remarkable, ascribing specific functions to the spirit (conscience, intuition, communion) and to the soul (volition, intellect, emotion). He gives an extensive analysis of these functions and explains how each of them is redeemed by the Holy Spirit and should be put under its full control. In like fashion he tries to explain how also every aspect of our physical life should be brought under the Spirit's dominion, involving victory over sickness and even death.

Questions: *Was Watchman Nee a super-Pietist? Do we dare teach the possibility of the Spirit's dominion over all spiritual and soul functions and even over the body and victory over the pangs of death? Do we guide students in the discovery of these realities?*

E. Pentecostal spirituality⁷

In his most interesting book, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, Steven J. Land defends the immediate relationship between Pentecostal spirituality and Pentecostal theology, and how they are integrated in Pentecostal affections. He finishes with a 'trinitarian revisiting', trying to redirect the attention to a passion for the kingdom which is ultimately a passion for God.

The book contains pointers towards spiritual development, as, for example, a quote from Robert Roberts:

I have to yearn for the kingdom, seek it, treasure it, desire it, before the vision it gives me will amount to Christian spirituality—that is will amount to hope, peace, joy, compassion and gratitude as genuine emotions.

⁷ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 174.

In this sense, Steven Land promotes motivation and zeal, and places spirituality in the eschatological tension of the 'already' and the 'not yet'. On the other hand, the Christian will find little in the form of a practical guide to spirituality in this line of thought.

Questions: *In general, we see indeed in Pentecostal Christians a more passionate yearning for more from God than we do with their more complacent Protestant/evangelical counterparts. We see a sometimes disturbing difference in approach to the charismata in charismatic and non-charismatic schools. Should we leave the handling of the charismata fully to the individual schools? Is there a place for them in our accreditation manuals?*

F. Franciscan spirituality⁸

Now to make a jump back in history. Who of us has not been impressed by St. Francis of Assisi? 'He had a profound sense of God as transcendent mystery and holy love. Out of that sprang his passionate love of the Saviour. . . . Scripture and the liturgy were his sole guides on the journey to God and he sought to observe the Gospel literally. This was no form of fundamentalism or legalistic literalism. Literal observance meant a total commitment to the spiritual values the gospel proclaims.'

His disciple, Bonaventure, proclaims that Christ is our metaphysics and logic. All intellectual activity has to begin at this centre in order to arrive at wisdom, not just knowledge. Reason has its place in the soul's

⁸ Eric Doyle, OFM, 'Franciscan Spirituality', in G.S. Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, (London: SCM, 1983), p. 159.

journey to God, but remains subject to faith. There comes a point where reason reaches its limits and then the will passes over into God. This spirituality has to lead man into a life of love, humility, poverty, denial of self and joyful dedication to Christ.

Obvious in the Franciscans is the definition of purpose and an indication of how to achieve spiritual maturity in applying imagination, the observance of nature, the final surrender of reason and the will to Christ.⁹

Questions: *Keywords: mysticism, passionate love for Christ, literal observation of the Gospel, the application of imagination and the observance of nature, wisdom, the surrender of the will and of reason to Christ. Are not some of our schools very poor in their attention to these elements? Is imagination for us a foe rather than a function to be developed? Do we do anything with the observance of nature? As a young man, I was deeply impressed by the Moody Science films. Evidently, they have been replaced by nature films by Attenborough, Discovery Channel and quite a few others. Do we ever use these materials (although they mostly are from pagan sources) to impress students (and ourselves) with the glory of God's creation? Do we pay attention to great spiritual music or visual art?*

G. Jesuit spirituality¹⁰

Ignatius de Loyola saw 'all things as proceeding from the Trinity and becoming means by which one can make one's way to one's end, beati-

tude by glorifying God. "Glorifying" here means praising and entails serving. Ignatius' endeavour was to make all his activities result in praise to God greater than would have accrued to Him without them. From this worldview sprang many other characteristics of his spirituality. It is biblical, theological, trinitarian, christocentric, contemplative, apostolic, ecclesiastical and as adaptable as the Christian faith itself, and it found expression in all that Ignatius said, did or wrote and thereby won many followers.'¹¹

Here we find a splendid list of criteria for what 'spirituality' should be and a fine statement on his personal integrity. Apparently, Ignatius was and lived what he preached.

Not all of us would be as enthusiastic as Ganss is about de Loyola. It cannot be denied, though, that here we find an amazing sense of purpose: the glory of God, and a strong determination to make this ideal work in his own life and in the lives of his disciples.

In his *Spiritual Exercises* he applied his worldview towards helping individual persons to discover God's will for themselves: How can they, by wise and prayerful decisions, fit themselves more co-operatively into his saving plan, in order to bring him greater glory from themselves and others?¹²

Questions: *Again we think on the imagination, the systematic training of the will and the senses, and this all very consciously for the greater glory of God. Do we apply any of these principles? How do we 'help individual persons to discover God's will for themselves'?*

⁹ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 24.

¹⁰ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 24

¹¹ George E. Ganss, SJ, 'Society of Jesus', in G.S. Wakefield (ed), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, (London: SCM, 1983), p. 225.

¹² Ganss, 'Society of Jesus,' p. 225.

What do we find in our schools?

I looked through some self-evaluation reports at hand in the EEAA office and found diverse syllabi on pneumatology, ethics, psychology, counselling, all containing items conducive to spiritual formation. There were also testimonies on how good the counselling in the school had been and how this would be a beacon for the student's own practice in the future. I found mention of mentoring programmes, cell groups for fellowship, counselling and prayer. But rarely did I find a syllabus on 'Spiritual Life' as such, either as a single course or a series of courses through the entire training period.

The approach of Manuals of Accreditation

Bible schools sometimes go through deep crises of conflict between faculty, staff and board members. Of course, nothing is more detrimental to spiritual formation than this. Should the accreditation of a school in conflict be suspended?

Spiritual life and moral life of course go hand in hand. The *Manual of Accreditation* of the EEAA has some questions in this regard in its

report forms, but nowhere is there written criteria. The Manual of TRACS says that 'Standards of behaviour must be established and maintained by the institution, that are consistent with moral and spiritual standards of biblical Christianity as set forth in the Scriptures. . . The institution's standards of conduct must enhance biblical moral values and personal discipline resulting in a lifestyle that respects the rights of others, provides caring service and outreach, and exemplifies a life of integrity and Christian values.' The 'Evaluative Criteria' repeat these requirements but do not give further details. None of this gives the evaluator any useful indicators on how to handle a situation turned sour.

Final Questions

Should this situation be changed? Should ICETE and its supporting associations be instrumental in devising clearer criteria for the spiritual formation of students? Should some of us devise a programme for training in spirituality to be sustained over the full period of our contact with students or even with alumni?

If so, feel free to pass on any suggestions.

Divine Benevolence

*God's pre-emptive gesture of love,
Has effected its redemptive purpose.
Transformed by that singular expression of grace,
We enjoy divine acceptance.*

From *Becoming . . .* (poetry reflecting theology) by Garry Harris, Adelaide, South Australia. (used with permission)

Transition From Modernity to Post-Modernity: A Theological Evaluation

Rolf Hille

Keywords: Reason, science, Enlightenment, Existentialism, Pragmatism, apologetics, alienation, apocalyptic, nihilism

2. The Relativizing of Truth

In the first section of our historical analysis we sketched the development from Pre-Modern theocentricity to Modern anthropocentricity to Post-Modern individualism. The following sections show the connection of Pre-Modern certainty about faith with the Modern autonomy of rea-

son, and finally, with Post-Modern plurality of truth.

2.1. Pre-Modern Certainty About Faith

Pre-Modern times started with theology as the most important main university discipline. Theology was recognized as the first of the university disciplines at the universities founded in the High Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas' Prolegomena to his *Summa Theologica* laid the foundation for theology as a traditional academic discipline. His method of argument is based on proofs from Scripture, Patristic quotes, and, finally, on ancient philosophy where Aristotle is given the prominent place as the quintessential philosopher.

Theology, therefore, lays claim to the foremost position among all academic disciplines and sciences because its knowledge goes beyond that of human reason (*ratio*). Aquinas, along with Medieval theology as a whole, considers reason as definitely a basic anthropological

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ability which is capable of penetrating reality and making knowledge about the inner world possible. But it reaches its limits in relation to knowledge of God and the way to salvation. Here all academic and scientific efforts are dependent on theology which enjoys the light of revelation. In spite of this interplay between faith and knowledge, however, there was still an awareness of human helplessness because the dangers found in the natural world were so obvious; there was also a strong tendency to attribute unusual appearances to the miraculous. Scientific research remained basic and open at all times for supernaturalistic explanations.¹

2.2. Modern Autonomy of Reason

Modernism presents itself as an enlightenment against traditional knowledge, science and supernaturalism, that is, the triumph of pure reason. The metaphor of light is, interestingly enough, already implied in the term 'Enlightenment.' In the German term '*Aufklaerung*' and also in the French '*siecle de lumiere*' the image of light appears. The 'Age of the Light' claims to overcome the dark Middle Ages with its traditional sciences, that is, with its dependency on literary authorities which had been wrong more than once. The Medieval university, according to the Enlightenment, could not really bring the truth to light on account of its intellectual presuppositions. Thus Kant, called the Enlightenment 'the breaking out of self-inflicted mental immaturity. The promising character of the

Modern Age shines forth in this context as well: we will be able to penetrate everything with reason.' The conviction of the 18th century was that reason could take you a lot further than Christian tradition.

Finally, people posited the following simple idea: why shouldn't reason, if it has been found to be true in temporal things, also have the final word in the area of religion and in regard to the ultimate questions of life? Kant's concept of a 'Religion within the Bounds of Pure Reason' must be understood in this sense. The Enlightenment therefore deals with a comprehensive claim to truth of a secular nature confronting theology in a deeply critical sense.

In this context, the Enlightenment must be considered, of course, as an intellectual movement in Europe; but it also changed Europe as a historical-ideological power. The French Enlightenment had an atheistic orientation through its connection to the French Revolution and thus stood in strict opposition to the church. This attitude is summed up in a pointed way in Voltaire's dictum, *Ecrasez l'infame*—'Whatever you do, crush the infamy (namely, the church). The encyclopaedists Diderot and d'Alembert fought against Christianity as empty madness.

In England, the Enlightenment was strongly influenced by Deism, the idea that, while there is a Creator God, he refrains completely from having anything to do with the world of history. Instead, Deists looked to an early form of monotheism which represented the actual religious-philosophical concerns of the representatives of the English Enlightenment. They wanted to get behind the concrete empirical religions to a common origin in order to distil out the moral aspects of each

1 See Reflection VIII.

one of the different religions. Miracles of nature, they argued, did not merit attention, but rather one should aspire to moral miracles. If people improve their character through education and moral renewal, then they are on the way to the true religion. This is the goal of the religion of reason. The overall aim of the Deists was to purify the Christian faith of all 'unreasonable' ideas, such as belief in miracles, and to eliminate all dogmas offensive to reason such as that of Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity. By this process they hoped to establish a universally applicable, morally-oriented religion of reason.

In contrast to the French and English Enlightenments, a 'pious' Enlightenment developed at first in Germany. In the area of physical theology, it sought to show the traces of divine omnipotence and omniscience in the events of nature as well as in the course of history. The hymns of Christian Fuerchtegott Gellert are representative of this pietistic movement as it was positively influenced by the Enlightenment, which in its early stages at least was faithful to the fundamental tenets of Christianity. Gellert's hymns are spiritual and biblically-based lyrics in which the Enlightenment is brought as close as possible to the Christian faith, even though it is apparent that he is trying hard to penetrate the doctrine of faith from the standpoint of reason and morality.

In the course of the historical development of ideas in philosophy, science, and society, Protestant theology tried then to keep pace with Modernism in the newly developing ideas of mediating theologies. A mediating theology, in this context, is understood as any effort to inte-

grate the form and content of Christian truth with the respective dominant philosophies or ideologies in as unproblematic a way as possible. It must be acknowledged that there was often a missionary motive involved in these mediating theologies. Modern theologians wanted to make it easier for their contemporaries to come to faith by getting rid of everything they thought was offensive. In this context, of course, it soon became clear that the process of accommodation to the respective dominant ideology of the day led to very different, even contradictory, theological ideas.

If we ask for a theological evaluation at the beginning of the 21st century, then it becomes quite apparent that in the process of the historical development of ideas, Modernism has taken on very many different forms. Along with this, the different philosophies and ideologies come and go in ever shorter time periods. It is this very abandoning and replacement of interpretive systems which is, in itself, one of the most basic characteristics of the rise of Post-Modernism.

Using my own terms I would now like to explain in the following section the intensive correlation between general cultural development and the (Post)-Modern history of theology. The serious problems which are visible in this accommodation process will be shown along the way. The second half of the 20th century reveals what is virtually the classic example of the way theology is susceptible to the influence of other ideologies and of the path to the intellectual / spiritual self-destruction of Protestantism.

We can look at the National Socialist ideology of the German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*) in

the Thirties and Forties. After World War II there appeared the existential hermeneutics of Rudolf Bultmann and his school under the influence of German and French Existentialism; this was combined with the programme of the demythologisation of the New Testament. With the political involvement of students at the end of the Sixties and beginning of the Seventies, a Marxist-revolutionary oriented materialistic exegesis was used which was applied to liberation theology.

Yet as time progressed, political theology proved to be spiritually unsatisfying because it did not meet human religious needs. Therefore, 'spirituality for combat' was developed in the context of the 5th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1975 in Nairobi. In the wake of the growing interest in a psychologically experienced reality of faith, German Catholic theologian Eugen Drewermann developed his exegesis of deep psychology which ultimately went hand in hand with the rediscovery of myth and led to a remythologization of the religious along the lines of the work of Carl-Gustav Jung. Today feminist theology has taken up into itself a multi-faceted spectrum of variety of Modernist as well as Post-Modernist mediating theologies. Ultimately behind these theological models is the fundamental conviction of Modernism that the autonomous object of reason is in the right against the claim of inspiration and can therefore put faith into different, new forms.

Despite all the good and honourable intentions which stand behind each of these efforts to accommodate the faith to the contemporary situation, the entire enterprise of modern theology has

become a tragedy. Its problem is clearly demonstrated in a story by the German poet and playwright, Bertolt Brecht, (1898-1956). In one of his calendar stories about 'Mr K.' he relates:

Mr. K. looked at a painting which gave some objects a very original, unconventional form. He said, 'In looking at the world, some artists are like many philosophers. In working on the form, the substance is lost.' I once worked for a gardener. He handed me a pair of hedge-clippers and told me to trim a laurel tree. The tree stood in a pot and was rented out for special occasions. Therefore, it had to be cone-shaped. I immediately began cutting off the wild branches, but, regardless of how hard I tried to get it into this cone shape, the more it wouldn't let me succeed in doing this. I had pruned away too much on several sides. When it finally took on the shape of a cone, the cone was very small. Disappointed, the gardener said to me, 'Well, it's a cone, but where is the laurel?'²

2.3. The Post-Modern Relativisation of the Question of Truth

The specific character of post-modernism lies in the identity crisis of modernism, whose claims to the comprehensive universal truth of reason have not ceased. The passionate conflict for absolute truth was characteristic of the transition from the Pre-Modern to Modernism. It is exactly this struggle for the truth which Post-Modernism has given up, in part out of resignation, in part because of agnosticism. In either case, the possibility of being able to know a universally and eternally valid truth has been abandoned, or else the pre-supposition is that there is no

² Bertolt Brecht, *Form and Substance, Stories About Mr. K.* See Reflection IX.

such truth at all.

This characteristic is important for the intellectual character of Post-Modernism—in day by day life, the question of truth is ignored and one goes about handling the affairs of life in a pragmatic manner. A discussion of truth seems meaningless and fruitless. People may maintain their own individual truths and ethical values and may live them out in their particular context, but these truths and values have no relevance for the public at large. In a pluralistic society there can be no normative worldview or interpretative ideas binding on all. Politically, this situation is indispensable and fundamentally necessary for the well being of a democratic state. However, as we have said earlier, Post-Modernism interprets the idea of tolerance in an agnostic manner: that is, any universal claim to truth is abolished.

The French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, who, along with his countrymen Foucault and Derrida, is one of the main proponents of philosophical Post-Modernism, starts out with the criticism of the so-called meta-narratives. The classical meta-narratives of Judaism and Christianity, and even of Marxism, with their teleologically oriented interpretations of history, are no longer trustworthy. Their ideas are therefore replaced by much more modest stories of a biographical or group-specific nature. The universal span from the Garden of Eden across a centuries-long history of salvation to the eschatological kingdom of God is rejected. The same may be said for the Communist view of history, which leads from a early society without property to a series of economically-based revolutions (brought about by dialectical processes) to the ultimate classless

society.

The presumed failure of all great concepts of history is a characteristic of Post-Modernism and points again to the relativizing of the question of truth; the self-disintegration of reason is tied to this. In the context of central philosophical questions, such as what reason was able to accomplish, even Kant realized that certain unavoidable questions still existed; these included: 'Where do I come from?', 'Where am I going?', 'What should I do?', 'What may I hope for?'. In his analysis of the human ability to attain knowledge, Kant realized that in view of the power of pure reason, answering these questions in the realm of empirical knowledge, or science is impossible. One can find no answer to the elementary basic questions of the transcendence of human existence and human hopes on the basis of pure reason. Therefore, with respect to the questions of meaning and existence, Kant takes the path to individual inner reflection and morality, the private spheres of human life. By virtue of his analysis of practical reason, he looks for and finds in the process of stating the questions the elementary values of freedom, immortality of the soul, and God. Yet, since these matters cannot be known, the individual can answer them only subjectively in practising a reasonable religious faith. As a result of this faith in reason, there is still no basis for the kind of certainty which would be comparable to empirical experiences or logical deductions. The postulates of practical reason deal with the reasonable, yet ultimately fictitious boundaries of existence which are set up in order to solve the existential riddles of life in a way that is satisfactory to the intellect.

The way Romanticism distin-

guished itself from the Enlightenment is very instructive; in our context it is interesting historically because of the critical relationship between Modernism and Post-Modernism. The Berlin Romantics, like the Schlegel Brothers, Novalis, and even Schleiermacher, felt very uncomfortable with the cold rationality and civil morality in the 18th century Enlightenment philosophy handed down to them. Claiming to put feeling, artistic intuition, ingenious creativity, and mystical religiosity back into their rightful place and to elevate them as the central matter of spiritual / intellectual life, the Romantics rejected the encompassing claim of validity of pure reason just as decisively as rationalism had done in its time to the basic tenets of faith in orthodox supernaturalism. Sociologically, there are also some surprising parallels between the 19th century Romantics and the Post-Modernism of our day (for example, the lifestyles and the very complicated relationships between the sexes).

The Neo-Kantians at the junction between the 19th and 20th centuries and the philosophers of critical rationalism and analytical philosophy have thus created in some respects a starting point for Post-Modernism in just the same way as the Enlightenment of Kantian provenance did for Romanticism. Ludwig Wittgenstein emphasizes at the end of his famous tractate *Logico-Philosophicus* the failure of the rational basis for the world and meaning in classical philosophy when he writes:

The right method of philosophy would be this: To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science, i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say

something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—but it would be the only strictly correct method.³

Consistent with this, Wittgenstein ends his analysis with the laconic seventh sentence of the tractate: 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.'⁴ But, this intentionally maintained silence is painfully related to the many questions which press upon us, as Kant has correctly shown. We cannot solve this problem using reason. The solution Kant himself suggested as the postulate of practical reason is, however, fragmented and fictitious. Thus it is unconvincing and led ultimately to the agnosticism of analytic philosophers such as Wittgenstein and others. In this respect many Post-Modern philosophers are in a similar basic intellectual situation to that of the Romantics almost two hundred years ago.

In this century, American philosophers have taken a different direction in their thinking from that of the Romanticists. For example, William James, one of the founders of American pragmatism, began first as a psychologist and wrote a book significant for the psychology of religion entitled *The Variety of Religious Experience*. In this work he studies authentic testimonies of conversions, miracle stories, and other religious experiences and compares these to one another psychologically. James assumes as his starting point that such experiences are comparable in

³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922), 6.53 pp. 188-189.

⁴ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 7.0 p. 189.

principle. He therefore does not take up the problem of the substantive question of truth and does not even want to decide it. With respect to matters of faith, only his work *The Will to Believe* is important. Here he advocates a pragmatically determined truth which has its relative justification as one's own subjective truth, but of course, it cannot lay claim to any universal validity.

In Post-Modernism, in general, the juxtaposition of religious claims to truth, is subject to such a subjective will. Just as in a supermarket, consumers in a pluralistic society can serve themselves religiously under the motto 'Myths in bags'. A 'pick and choose mentality,' just as in the supermarket, is dominant, thus allowing everyone to stock up on salvation articles according to each person's respective individual religious needs, whether it is Christianity or esoteric religions, magic or mysticism, resurrection hope or concepts of reincarnation. Take whatever you like, everything is available!⁵

2.4. The Importance of Theological Apologetics in Overcoming Relativism

The elimination of questions of truth with the uncertainty produced by this development has also directly affected us as theologians. Therefore, I would like to make a strong appeal for work in apologetics, remembering in particular the work of German theologian Karl Heim (1874-1958) in this area. In 1905 as representative of the German Christian Students' Association in Wernigerode, Thuringia, Germany, he gave an interesting lecture on the

topic 'Are Unsolved Questions a Hindrance to Faith?'. He starts out with a reference to the critical questions of science at that time, especially those of brain psychology and the theory of evolution, but also even the problems of historical-critical exegesis of the Bible. He points out that they presented massive problems, and created doubt among Christian students. Therefore, he demanded that we do work in apologetics in order to be more effective in counselling students with these doubts.

Apologetics does not only have its importance as a discipline of systematic-theology only in the intellectual confrontation with philosophy and the sciences, but it is also important as a discipline of practical theology. It is a matter of responsible counselling of people who have fallen prey to doubt. So in his lecture, Heim applies Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37) in a new way. Like the traveller who has fallen among thieves and is saved by the merciful Samaritan, so the believer needs counselling to help with his thinking when he falls into doubt.

Based on these thoughts of Heim, I would like to comment on the present situation of theological education among Evangelicals. My impression is that evangelical colleges and seminaries by and large stayed on course in view of the challenges of Modernism and Post-Modernism with respect to hermeneutics. In the conflict with mediating ideologies and philosophies we have not allowed ourselves to be corrupted in biblical exegesis, but rather, have asked which method of hermeneutics can be derived from the Scriptures themselves. The essential foundation of biblical hermeneutics has been the primary apologetical

⁵ See Reflection X.

goal.

However, where we have had greater difficulties due to the fact that we are caught up in the wake of our own culture, is in the comprehensive philosophical debate with the thinking of the Modern Age and currently with that of Post-Modernism. In a multiform pluralistic society which relativizes the question of truth from the very start, a higher and more comprehensive apologetic ability is needed. It is necessary to advance arguments with respect to systematic theology as well carrying on dialogue with respect to practical theology.

I would now like to explain how this apologetic task can be performed, making use of three examples from the history of philosophy. They are from philosophers who represent the thinking of Modernism and each of whom stands over against a philosopher who argues as a believing Christian. With respect to the substance of their arguments, the apologists of the faith present features in their discussion with their 'Modern' counterparts which in part anticipate Post-Modern positions. The theological debate which is called for at the present time cannot, therefore, simply take over the arguments that are presented here, but must already take into consideration the fact that the discussion is juxtaposed with Post-Modernism. My interest here, then, in view of the very sophisticated intellectual questions of debate, is mainly in the way these philosophers exemplify that ability to carry out critical dialogue and to model patterns of thinking.

The first example is that of the Frenchman Blaise Pascal who opposed his rationalistic countryman René Descartes (16th-17th centuries), pointing out the fundamental

necessity of distinguishing between the '*raisons de la raison*' (the reasons for reason) and the '*raisons du coeur*' (reasons of the heart). As a mathematician, Pascal referred to different dimensions of thought which belong to different structures of thinking as well as to different areas of being. They also lead, therefore, to types of certainty which must be differentiated from each other.

Secondly, two Koenigsberg (Germany) philosophers stand opposed to one another, namely, Immanuel Kant and Johann Georg Hamann (18th century). Hamann appeals to the *veritas hebraica* (the Hebrew concept of truth), that is, truth as determined by and with respect to a person. Kant, in his epistemological criticism, had tried to show 'pure reason', so to speak, as the distillation beyond all historical, linguistic, or even personal considerations. He was concerned with the ability to achieve absolute objectivity of thinking and, thereby, to claim the universal validity of the results of thinking. Hamann proved that a pure form of reason so isolated from all biographical or historical influences does not exist. Instead, thinking in the biblical sense, is integrated into the personal covenantal faithfulness of God, in the *emuna* (Heb., trust, faithfulness), which, therefore, can only be truth which is grounded in or based on a person, and thus, responsible.

Finally, Søren Kierkegaard (19th century) developed his *Philosophical Fragments*, a book title which characterizes the whole intention of his thought, in conscious contradiction to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Kierkegaard decidedly opposes the all-encompassing claim of Hegel's system who, with his dialectical analysis of the histori-

cal process, endeavoured to penetrate the universality of all reality and to show it as necessary for reason. Kierkegaard, in a completely modest manner, sought to oppose this with his analysis of existence as a 'philosophical fragment'. In view of his fear and despair, the individual must first attempt the leap of faith into a personal encounter with Christ in order to really and truly achieve his existence.⁶

3. Self and Truth

In the third and final part of our brief analysis of the movement from Modernism to Post-Modernism, I would like to show how the atomization of self in Post-Modern individualism and the elimination of the question of truth have led to a comprehensive and far-reaching existential crisis of meaning.

3.1. The Socio-Cultural Changes of the Time-Space Experience

The processes present in the history of ideas which are shown here are connected to two basic socio-cultural conditions. These conditions, which are indispensable preconditions for the Post-Modern situation, are the compression of time and the acceleration of time.

Time and space as epistemological forms make observable experience possible; they also constitute our existence as an ontological continuum. Therefore, the paradigm change from Modernism to Post-Modernity is directly connected to the change in both of these basic dimensions.

3.1.1. The Compression and Unbounding of Space

The *stabilitas loci*, the clearly defined and defining stability of spatial relationships, is characteristic of the Pre-Modern Age. The *orbis christianus* as the clear realm of western culture provided for both the ancient Mediterranean world and the Germanic and Slavic peoples north of the Alps a geographical context for life which was preserved for many centuries. However, in the 16th and 17th centuries, this was blown open with the discovery of the two American continents, the circumnavigation of Africa, and the advance to East Asia, including the Pacific and finally Australia. In these developments, the truly global dimensions of our planet first came into view. Humanity seen as a whole with its diversity of its languages, customs, and artistic and religious traditions, created the preconditions for modern cosmopolitan and multi-cultural consciousness.

The cosmic problem of modern humanity is tied to the experience of completely different cultures in successive periods. Not only were new continents discovered one after another during this time, but the window to an endlessly distant universe was opened up by astronomy. For Pre-modern civilization, there was an uncontested, spatial centre to the universe, which not only served as home and protection, but was also the exclusive scene of redemptive history. Now it turned out to be a tiny planet rotating in a very marginal solar system somewhere among millions of other galaxies. Thus a person became, in the words of Jacques Monod, 'a gypsy in a remote corner of the universe', a cosmic orphan.

The lifting of the boundaries of

⁶ See Reflection XI.

space in the Modern Age could be summarized in terms of its extensive destabilizing effect: on the one hand, the whole astrophysical emptiness of our world creates a basic feeling of lostness in an unending, cold, and unfriendly universe. On the other hand, one becomes increasingly aware of the relativity of one's own worldview when cultures engage with each other after a long and intensive phase of colonial superiority. The opening of the boundaries through astronomy and the global compression of space create at the same time the typical feeling of homelessness for the contemporary post-modern individual, who as a world citizen is looking for a way between unbounded freedom and meaninglessness

3.1.2. The Acceleration of Time

The experience of the acceleration of time is directly related to the compression of space and the lifting of its boundaries. A visit to the German Museum in Munich or the British Museum in London makes the process of scientific-technological acceleration clearly obvious. The development of civilization was quite slow for very long periods up to the beginning of the Modern Age, but a powerful push for innovation then began. The focus of the leading sciences moved from mechanics at first to physics, then in general, to chemistry, and finally to biology. But it has led to groundbreaking changes in all areas of life.

In the meantime, the half-lives (in which the entire body of man's knowledge doubles) turn out to be shorter and shorter all the time. The process of modernization has accelerated so much that it can hardly be

understood anymore by the individual, which raises a basic feeling of fear about what is new and uncontrollable. This unsettling characteristic of the Modern Age is one of the sources of Post-Modern scepticism; it is more than simply the rejection of technological advancement by protest groups such as the Green Party.

To depict clearly the change shown here I need only to be reminded of the processes of acceleration at work during the lifespan of my grandfather. Born in 1876, he fled as a school boy to the ditches along the streets with his friends when they saw the first bicyclists ride through their home village. When he died at the age of 93, he had experienced via television the first Sputnik orbit, space technology, and the threat of nuclear weapons. Intercontinental mobility and global networking of communication accelerates time and turns this world into the 'global village' indeed. When I began my ministry at the Bengel-Haus more than ten years ago, the rhythm of the day to day business in the office was still set by the arrival of the good old correspondence by letters ('snail mail' as it is called today). Today this rhythm has been replaced by the hectic pace of continuous contact by fax, e-mail, and cell phone.

Along with the justifiable optimism brought about by progress, the seemingly unstoppable development of scientific-technological acceleration and its impact on time is causing serious fears to our civilization; enlightenment is accompanied by a dark shadow because of these changes.

The ambivalence of the Modern mood of progress and Post-Modern resignation characterizes feelings about life at the turn of the millenni-

um; the twentieth century we have left behind was marked by absolutely opposite experiences. On the one hand, an historically unique improvement in living conditions and health has appeared; the Spanish philosopher, Ortega y Gasset, describes this as 'the revolt of the masses', by which he means that the ordinary people now share almost all the privileges which once belonged to the elite. Participation in the advantages of civilization has become possible by the spread of technology. On the other hand, the twentieth century was the stage of the most terrible tragedies—wars, refugees, mass expulsions and environmental catastrophes, and has, as its characteristic, symbolic words like Holocaust, Hiroshima, and Chernobyl.

A Post-Modern messenger of these ambivalent experiences is reflected in a kind of '*Prinzessin auf der Erbse*' (Princess on the Pea) effect. This is a reference to the fairy-tale *Prinzessin auf der Erbse* which is about the suffering of a spoiled princess who cannot sleep at night because she feels disturbed by a hard object. Though only a tiny pea is hidden underneath her mattress, for reasons of comfort she asks for more and more soft blankets to be laid on her bed. Yet she has become so sensitive that she still feels her sleep is disturbed by a single pea. So, as philosopher Odo Marquard of Giessen, Germany has pointed out, in its efforts to eliminate all possible causes of suffering, western society is becoming at the same time more and more sensitive to the last remaining pockets of suffering.

3.1.3. Coping with the (Post)-Modern Crisis of Time and Space Theologically

First of all, the acceleration of time corresponds to certain apocalyptic perspectives of the New Testament where the announcement of end times' phenomena is characterized by such terms as 'in short', 'soon', and 'having little time'. The seemingly steady passing of time is accelerated at its end. Yet, Christ still remains the Lord of time because he is the Lord of eternity. He also determines the accelerated process of end-time events and, for his part, shortens the time of tribulations and persecutions. In this sense he gives the assurance that 'my times are in your hands' (Psalm 31:15) and thereby asserts superiority over time. In view of global mass communication and the increasingly shorter half-lives in the doubling of knowledge, it is existentially important to have a spiritual centre.

Christians in general and theologians in particular must find their roots by getting to know the Scriptures and meditating on them, for it is the Scriptures which give orientation and security in a period when there is an accelerating flood of information. In the face of permanent change, divine revelation means concentrating life and thought on the most essential. Knowing what will happen at the end gives wisdom when dealing with the next to last things.

In the Modern period, mankind experienced a destabilization of existence as a result of the astronomical research of Galileo Galilei, but the resulting damage is put into a new light by the biblical teaching on covenant election. In pre-Modern theology, the geo-centric view of the

world was posited as logically necessary by reason of the unique position of mankind in the whole of creation and redemptive history. The central position in the cosmos befits mankind as the crown of creation; the planet earth was also a fitting stage for biblical redemptive history and the history of the church proceeding from it. This theological prejudice was based on the deepest human conviction that divine election was expressed in a dominant and prominent astrologically-fixed positioning of the earth in space.

However, looking at the criteria of divine election in Scripture it quickly becomes clear that God bestows his incomprehensible love on the lowly and despised. This is true with respect to Israel as the lowliest among the peoples, as well as the Christians and the church, who do not belong to the high and mighty of this world. The same is true for God's elective grace bestowed on prominent individual figures in redemptive history, such as Abraham, David, Paul, and others.

It is thereby implicitly underscored that our planet, as a tiny grain of dust at the edge of an unendingly vast universe, has exactly the position in the creation which corresponds to it. The incomprehensible relativity of the world in the physical cosmos corresponds theologically to its unique election as the place of God's revelation.

Finally, the reduction of our world to a 'global village' with all the challenges of a multi-cultural society resulting from it runs against the nature of the church and her commission. Christ has placed his disciples of all nations in a global fellowship of diaspora congregations and sends them to all peoples with the Great Commission. The spiritual

ecumenicity of the church of Jesus Christ corresponds with the international scope of her mission. The phenomena of globalisation, which is occurring at the threshold of the third millennium after Christ's birth, corresponds to the modern experience of the compression of space, and so intensifies our mission.⁷

3.2. Dionysian Nihilism in View of Post-Modern Absurdity

Arthur Schopenhauer founded a kind of pessimistic nihilism based on the primary religions of East Asia which propose that the fundamental human task is to have compassion on all creatures. His philosophy of life, *The World as Will and Perception*, was intended to affect Enlightenment rationalism as well as the idealism of the Modern Age, and thus it supports the rise of the Post-Modern period.

Friedrich Nietzsche took up this vitalistic idea too, yet turned it more radically into an absolutely Dionysian concept of world mastery and world pleasure. His nihilism presumes modern atheism in the cold-blooded murder of God and bases the reevaluation of all values on this horrible act. In the detour that civilization makes into Christian socialization, compassion becomes the mere resentment which the weak implant on the strong, a process which corrupts life itself. Thus, in Nietzsche's opinion, the West has been cheated out of the fruits of the ancient pre-Christian pagan world. For this reason, Nietzsche announces the Post-Modern Age in a poetic hymn. The end of all the foundations of Pre-

7 See Reflection XII.

Modernism and Modernism is prophesied with prophetic pathos in Nietzsche's work, *The Gay Science*.

The madman.—Have you not heard of that madman who lit the lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the marketplace, and cried incessantly: 'I seek God! I seek God!'—As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated?—Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Whither is God?' he cried; 'I will tell you. *We killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the voice of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.'

'How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a great deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.'

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. 'I have come too early,' he said then, 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves.'

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account he is said always to have replied nothing but: 'What after all are these churches if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?'⁸

This text, with the poetic force of his Dionysian nihilism, can almost be read as the Post-Modern Manifesto.

The madness of the insane person who has got rid of God and raised up himself as God in an anti-Christian attitude and thereby lifted all cosmic bounds and moral restrictions has appeared several times in the 20th century. The Post-Modern promise praised by Nietzsche and a product of his foolhardy optimism, has, in the meantime, shown itself to be an illusory ideology in the numerous historical catastrophes of the age. The high point of Dionysius is not just followed by a kind of 'hangover' of our civilization, but, rather, by the historical and human traumas of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and Chernobyl with their absolute crises of meaning. It is not entirely erroneous that Adolf Hitler had a place of worship erected for Friedrich

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Random House, 1974) (trans Walter Kaufmann), Book Three section 125, pp. 181-182.

Nietzsche in Weimar and even visited it quite often; he had the Buchenwald concentration camp built near Weimar.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Post-Modern despair experienced a new flowering of nihilism, especially in the form of French existential philosophy. This arose out of a return to ancient mythology and was formed in the context of the conditions of life in the presently existing Modern Age. Jean-Paul Sartre describes nausea as a basic existential condition of the human person confronted with him/herself, the shock of existence as a result of the human nihilistic poisoning of self. His countryman, Albert Camus, agrees in principle with this shattering diagnosis, yet breaks through evident absurdity with unconditional atheism by allowing the defiant Sisyphus to appear against all despair in daring rebellion.

In Camus' philosophy of existence, we can see modern humanity's unsolvable problem, namely, the resigned self-despair worked out savagely in modern philosophy concerning the virtually unsolvable basic human situation. Camus remarks in his *The Myth of Sisyphus*,

You have already grasped that Sisyphus is the absurd hero. He is as much through his passions as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing. This is the price that must be paid for the passions of this earth. Nothing is told us about Sisyphus in the underworld. Myths are made for the imagination to breathe life into them. As for this myth, one sees merely the whole effort of a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay-covered mass, the foot wedging it, the

fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth-clotted hands. At the very end of his long effort measured by skyless space and time without depth, the purpose is achieved. Then Sisyphus watches the stone rush down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it up again toward the summit. He goes back down to the plain.⁹

Here, mankind, in our basic situation and longing, is thrust back completely on to the physical world. Hopelessness is experienced as absolute absurdity in which reason and experience in the world, the desire for happiness, and powerless subjection to reality can no longer be experienced; therefore, every independent idea remains open and arbitrary. Post-Modernism has come into this inheritance. The other side of the existential experience of self, according to Camus, consists therefore, as already noted, of human transcendence in a defiant revolt against fate. In accepting the absurd, mankind confronts the true self and gains the daring power to resist, which is reminiscent of Nietzsche's world-affirming nihilism. This is the reason for all of Sisyphos' secret joy:

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.¹⁰

Post-Modernism does away with

⁹ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960) (trans. Justin O'Brien), p. 97.

¹⁰ Camus, *Myth*, p. 99.

Camus' exalted heroism, and continues on through the absolute world, less in proud awareness and more in numb pragmatism. Post-Modernism considers all lofty ideas to be unnecessary, an emotional hubris which brings little help to the insanity of daily life. People look only for a small amount of happiness for themselves, something which everyone may experience just as they please. The Modern crisis of existence, therefore, reaches a state of decay in Post-Modernism, whose fragments are used by each person to make up his own provisional world. Sisyphus is less like a rebel in this world than a drunkard. It may be justifiably doubted that this person, when he wakes up, can be imagined as a happy person.¹¹

3.3. Christian Faith and Hope Overcome the Post-Modern Crisis of Existence

What is our calling as evangelical theologians in view of a context that argues from an agnostic standpoint? Firstly, there are some important aspects to the disillusionment apparent today in the wake of positivism and the analytical philosophy of language. The exegesis of the Pauline epistles, especially Romans and First Corinthians, as well as the study of the Reformation are helpful in dealing with this situation. Using Scripture and contradicting the theology of the Late Medieval period, Luther discovered that is impossible for fallen humanity to save itself by good works. We find salvation only by God's grace, not by moral effort. God justifies the sinner for the sake of the suffering and death of Christ.

Christ alone brings reconciliation. This is the message of Romans especially.

Parallel to this, it is important now in our modern world to be aware of the corresponding truth regarding the theory of knowledge of the first two chapters of First Corinthians. According to Paul, it is not only impossible to redeem mankind through our own moral abilities, but it is also illusionary to want to find a definite certainty with regard to the ultimate question of humanity by means of pure reason. It is true that mankind, being in the image of God, is characterized especially by the ability to will and to think. After the Fall, however, both of these basic human possibilities of the will and reason are no longer sufficient to restore the broken relationship between God and mankind. By pure reason alone humanity cannot find any certainty regarding faith in any worldview.

In spite of this inability, as spiritual/intellectual beings, we are dependent upon a reliable foundation for life. Therefore, the tragedy of the animal *rationale*, as Thomas Aquinas defined mankind, is that even strength of intellectual talent is not able to deal with and overcome the problem of human misery 'east of Eden'. At the beginning of the Modern Age, even Blaise Pascal spoke in his *Pensées* with great clarity and insight about the limitations of our rational understanding

It is, therefore, only through God's grace that individuals, who by nature are entangled in agnosticism, can find a solid basis for their lives through the gift of faith. Luther expressed this in an incomparably terse and precise way in his *Shorter Catechism*: 'I believe that I cannot come to believe in my Lord Jesus Christ on my own intelligence or

11 See Reflection XIII.

power, but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel . . . ‘

In view of the fact that hedonism has become the most influential Post-Modern worldview, we should confront modern culture anew with the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In our world of empirical facts, we cannot expect people to believe on the basis of myths or rely only on symbols to deal with the difficult experience of death. In view of the problems of human misery, sickness, and death, it is not possible to preach salvation and ultimate human fulfilment simply in a metaphorical fashion. If we wish to do something about reality, we can do it only by confronting the fact of this world with other empirical facts. Therefore, Paul’s method of argument in I Corinthians 15:1-8 is also still very important. Only the historical factuality of the resurrection has the power to move people to seek the risen Christ who is still alive today.

Only people who are not moved by the fear of death can resist the temptations of our hedonistic society. The conviction Paul expresses in Romans 8:16 enables and encourages Christians to give their lives for their neighbours: ‘I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.’ This hope makes a person open to sharing earthly possessions with the poor. It makes us ready to give our own time and energy to those who need spiritual counsel and practical help.

The martyrs of the early church called into question the Hellenistic world of their day with its speculations about the immortality of the soul by preaching the concrete hope of the resurrection of the dead. I am convinced that we as Christians in

our modern world must totally rethink how we preach the contents of eschatological hope in a concrete way. We need renewed courage in preaching the biblical message of Judgement Day without reservation, the promise of eternal life as well as eternal punishment. Only in this way can we gain the real historical context in which the coming kingdom of God can be proclaimed and demonstrated as relevant and evident. The horizon of time must be discovered anew *sub specie aeternitatis*.

3.4. Perspectives for Renewal

In the context of the tremendous changes we have experienced in our world since the late 1980s, I am reminded finally of an event which took place in 1969. During the period of student unrest in western Europe a so-called ‘go in’ was organized by students during the German Lutheran Church Convention in Stuttgart; it took place in an auditorium filled with 6,000 delegates. They unveiled a giant banner where everyone could read the words ‘Jesus is dead. Marx is alive!’ This event was a typical phenomenon for modern secularism. In view of this provocation, Christians then had to ask themselves whether there was still a chance of evangelizing a Europe defined by socialist utopias. Today, after the collapse of worldwide communism, the slogan ‘Jesus is dead. Marx is alive!’ is presented in a totally different light, for Marxism-Leninism has come to its definite end, both politically as well as ideologically.

Therefore, we should study quite carefully the mystery of the church of Jesus Christ throughout church history. Here, we can see that Christ has protected his church and

renewed her again and again through the centuries. I would like to elucidate this briefly using three classic epochs of history.

Did not all appear to be lost in the first few centuries after Christ, especially in view of the Diocletian persecution? Yet, Christ strengthened the early church not only to remain grounded in the faith, but showed himself as the Living One by the fact that his gospel had penetrated into all provinces of the Roman Empire in spite of all pagan resistance.

However dark and lost the situation of the church appeared to be in the period of the Renaissance popes, Christ still gave the Reformation for this muddled situation; it was a renewal of his church from the top down. At the beginning of the 16th century, no one could have predicted from a human perspective that such a profound change in the history of the church was imminent.

The situation was also extremely difficult in the 19th century. The masses followed the philosophical higher critics—such as Feuerbach and Marx. Yet right at this time, Christ gave the Great Awakening in North America and also a number of

outbreaks of revival in Europe. This resulted in a strong missionary movement worldwide which left in its wake churches in almost all the countries of the so-called 'Third World'.

Therefore, I would like to close with the following hope-filled outlook for the future. Through solid teaching and research as evangelical theologians, we have been called to help the church of Jesus Christ of our day to fulfil more effectively her calling in the modern world. It is only the Risen Christ who can give new impetus and new life to our post-Christian world—and this will always be the case. He is able to call a movement into being which, under the current conditions, we cannot even yet imagine. He is the one who shows himself to be the Sovereign Lord of his church. His power is even in effect during persecutions; for small minorities which seem to grow ever smaller, there is hope because his word can cause a new revival. Christ is Lord. That is enough for us to be obedient to his calling in our Modern world as well as in a Post-Modern world.¹²

12 See Reflection XIV.

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Stan Guthrie is the managing editor of *Evangelism and Missions Information Service* based at Wheaton College USA.

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Reflections on Modernity and Post-Modernity for Theological Education

by Rolf Hille

Keywords: Modern, Post-Modern, Enlightenment, information age, theological education, seminary, paradigm, truth, apologetics

Introduction

These reflective remarks, which relate directly to theological education, were originally presented as part of the paper by Dr Rolf Hille printed above, entitled 'Transition From Modernity to Post-Modernity: A Theological Evaluation'. They served to summarize the oral presentation at the ICETE Consultation and to facilitate discussion. Footnotes in the paper above indicate the appropriate reference point for each Reflection. Note that Reflections 1-7 relate to Part I of the paper, which was published in our April 2000 issue.

Reflection I

The Relevance of this Topic for Theological Education in the Third World

Modernity and Post-Modernity are related to typical phenomena in the philosophical development of the western world. Is theological education in Asia, Africa, and Latin America unnecessarily overlaid with

these kinds of questions? In response to this justifiable question, I would like to list the following five arguments which seem important to me in dealing with this topic.

1. The 21st century will become the Information Age globally. Certain people in specific geographical areas can no longer be isolated from powerful ideas and intellectual movements.

2. The ideas of the Modern Age, developed in the West (Europe and North America), have brought progress in medicine, industry, and other spheres by means of the natural sciences and technology in which all nations understandably wish to have a share. Yet, one cannot completely separate this scientific-technological heritage from the thought structure and the spirit of the Enlightenment, which is closely tied to these advances. This fact will cause great problems in the future for all cultures and religions which have not yet had any Age of Enlightenment in their histories.

3. The process of urbanization taking place worldwide is increasing the

trend towards international cultural exchange and is even creating, to a certain degree, one unified civilization strongly influenced by the West.

4. The more demanding the academic level of a theological seminary, the more western philosophy, its history, and ways of thinking will influence it through theological literature that is used. This is a reason why, in the past, many ecumenically-oriented churches allowed their leaders to do doctorates in the West. Evangelical leaders in the respective countries must also be able to hold their own in the resultant intellectual/philosophical discussion.

5. Evangelical churches and theologians in the West have had, in part, a centuries-long intensive intellectual struggle with the challenges of Modernity and Post-Modernity. In view of unbiblical and spiritually-misleading influences, western theologians can, therefore, also help the church worldwide in its effort to overcome these dangers. Moreover, treatment of the topic 'Modernity and Post-Modernity' can really support theologians responsible for education only if it shows the roots, respective contexts, and arguments which overcome this way of thinking. 'If one part (of the body) suffers, every part suffers with it . . .' (1 Cor. 12:26)

Reflection II

Theology as Serving Jesus through his Church

It must be clear in theological education that theology has no purpose in and of itself merely in terms of the pursuit of academic brilliance by which people actualize themselves intellectually. It is also not an art which people pursue based on their

own abilities. Rather, theology is done in service to Jesus and occurs through the empowerment of his Spirit. Among the diverse charismatic gifts which are manifest in the church, the gifts of the word, wisdom, teaching, and the distinction of spirits are very important for theologians. They should be given a priority in education, identified and nurtured. In an age of pluralism, syncretism, and multi-cultural societies these gifts must be recognized and exercised when dealing with difficult and challenging topics. Bearing in mind these concerns and methodological aspects, it is most appropriate to study the philosophical debate with Modernity and Post-Modernity.

Reflection III

Theological Colleges and Seminaries as 'Pre-Modern' Sub-Cultures

A theology teacher once used the metaphor of military training for the task of theological education; he pointed to the fact that soldiers are not trained out on the front, but back in their own home country. Something of the same can be said for theology students. They need the protective environment of a Christian seminary where they can be prepared for practical service on the 'missionary front'. In this sense, seminaries where theology teachers live, pray, and work together with the students are islands of Christian faith in a secular or multi-religious environment. However, an evangelical seminary as seen, sociologically speaking, as kind of a 'pre-modern sub-culture' in society.

One must clearly understand that being a purely Christian institution is, on the one hand, a necessity because

of the spiritual influence and the need to concentrate on educational matters; yet, on the other hand, it creates an artificial world significantly different from the reality which surrounds it. It is important that everyone who is a part of the education process agrees that the relative seclusion of this situation is not an end in itself, but serves to prepare one solidly for the challenges of Modernity, Post-Modernity, or whatever missionary challenges there are. Internships in churches and with missionaries during seminary education, therefore, have an important function. The 'pre-modern' situation corresponds, then, to Jesus' practice of taking his disciples aside time and again to a secluded place before sending them out to do public ministry.

Reflection IV

A Model Study of how the Acceptance of an Idea can be seen as a Fundamental Change of Paradigms

The transition from theo-centric to anthropo-centric thinking presents a model whereby the significance and effect of a paradigm change for theology can be studied with respect to culture and the history of philosophy. One could say that the new paradigm gains acceptance, as it were, in concentric circles. With Descartes, it begins with one of his epistemological questions (*cogito ergo sum*). This is continued by Kant in the area of practical moral behaviour (freedom from all heteronomous divine commands), and becomes a universal model for all of human existence (humanity creates itself) with Fichte. Students can learn through this process how a culture can be shaken

in its foundations and changed by a new approach to thinking as well.

Reflection V

A Model Study of how the Radicalising of an Approach to Thinking can Lead to a Serious Crisis

The worsening of modern anthropocentric thinking in Post-Modern individualism makes clear the momentum, yet also the self-destructive power, of a kind of thinking which has separated itself from God and his Word. The gift God gives to us as humans of creating us as free and independent individuals is 'damned to freedom' for Sartre. In this separation from God, social relationships are also abandoned. The individual is pushed into the loneliness of egotism and loses the capacity for responsible, loving fellowship. The study of Post-Modernism can illustrate concretely the fruits of such thinking.

Reflection VI

Learning How to Deal with the Gift of Individuality

Characteristic of biblical anthropology is, first of all, the positive view of the individual; an interesting comparison could be made here with the East Asian religions or Marxist-collectivist ideology. Modern individualism is basically rooted in the premises of Christian anthropology, yet, as mentioned in this paper, it perverts this foundation.

Then, theological education, especially in the context of a seminary, offers many different opportunities to exercise a healthy self-understanding as one develops a balance between individual freedom connect-

ed to Christ and loving responsibility for a fellowship. The possibility of individual development and, at the same time, integration in a fellowship is important for future service in the church. This has to do with learning how to accept certain rules and authorities. If this is learned in seminary, it helps greatly in the service of the church and presents a good Christian witness especially in a Post-Modern environment.

Reflection VII **Learning to Think** **Discriminately**

The fact that one intellectual development has led to disastrous mistakes should not lead theological education to fall into the error of a 'black and white' kind of thinking. Every heresy gains its attractiveness because it contains elements of truth and good. Thinking with discrimination helps to distinguish between truth and error; note the admonition: 'test everything; hold on to the good.' (1 Thess. 5:21)

This means that, for good reasons, even Christians do not want to do without the advances in technology and medicine made possible by the European Enlightenment. The same is also true for the development of democracy and human rights which were not realized as such in the Pre-Modernism of the so-called Christian West. Theological education must provide a foundation showing which impulses of modern thinking are compatible with the Bible and which are not, i.e., learning how one can affirm the positive potential of a certain approach to thinking, and yet, at the same time, avoid its wrong developments.

Reflection VIII **Showing the Freedom and** **Obligation of Faith for** **Theology**

An evangelical seminary assumes that in doing academic work one recognizes the authority of the Scriptures and, in part also, special church creeds. However, this approach may be seen as Pre-Modern in contrast with the highly pluralistic Modern and Post-Modern world in which the seminary exists. This Pre-Modern presupposition has been radically called into question by scholarly and philosophical criticism since the Enlightenment. Therefore this approach to the foundation of faith must be supported strongly by the system of theological education. This does not mean every Christian active in church has to be able to understand this basis, but certainly every full-time preacher, teacher, counsellor, or missionary who serves in the church of Jesus Christ must have this understanding.

Theological Education requires a certain balancing act on the part of the teachers. On the one hand, it must remain clear that every theology teacher should be anchored in faith and biblical teaching. The evangelical teacher should not be a person who is a representative of doubt and uncertainty, but, rather one who can offer help and security. On the other hand, students should also experience an atmosphere of intellectual freedom in which they may honestly and openly ask all questions which arise among them as they encounter modern criticism. If this freedom is not permitted, then we are educating young people to be hypocrites and we are not helping them at all to overcome the problems of doubt in a scriptural way. If

they have not learned it at seminary for themselves, then they will not be able to help their church members who have temptations, nor can they convince people of other religions or unbelievers of the message of Jesus.

Reflection IX

The Importance of Discriminate Learning and Modelled Learning Examples

European Enlightenment took on different characters in France, England, and Germany; these differences provide a further interesting model for learning how to think critically in theological education. The same intellectual approach in thinking can, in different historical situations and with different cultural preconditions, lead to very different consequences. The latter is becoming increasingly true in a global world with contrasting cultures.

It can be a fruitful exercise in a seminar class to consider how the acceptance of the rationalistic presuppositions of the Enlightenment would work in Islamic, Hindu, or animistic cultures, and what effects this rationalism would have on the evangelization of such cultures. It has been justifiably emphasized, especially by Evangelical theologians in the Third World, that dealing with the diverse theological ideas of the West (such as those of Rudolf Bultmann, or Paul Tillich) presents a senseless foreign infiltration into theological education. They say students should learn more about the intellectual conflict within their own cultural context. One can only agree with this demand. Of course, the strong influence of western theology means that the challenge remains of studying thoroughly the position of

at least one of the most important liberal theologians of the Modern Age. It is senseless to work on all of modern theology, and conversely, it is helpful to require work on individual representatives of this theology as models for intellectual analysis. If students have understood and thought through this example of liberal theology, they can also see through other theologies and overcome them biblically.

Reflection X

The Pedagogy of Relative and Absolute Truth

The relativizing of truth has never been a pedagogical concept. Just as one cannot educate a small child in an intellectual vacuum without diverse decisions made by parents beforehand, so the question of truth also cannot be left open for a long time in an open society. People are created for the knowledge of truth and they will find inner peace only when they have attained certainty of truth. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary as a precondition for a successful education to found a theological seminary on the clear and unambiguously defined truth of faith.

Reflection XI

The Importance of Apologetics in Theological Education

Because of their spiritual heritage, evangelical theologians tend to think that a thorough education in biblical exegesis is enough to qualify one as a theologian. But it is, in fact, the missionary orientation of the evangelical movement which points to the great importance of Apologetics. Christian Apologetics tries to under-

stand the thinking of non-Christian discussion partners, to discover aspects of their world view which are still open, and to connect the message of the gospel to them. Work in Apologetics, which calls for solid faith as well as the openness of love, is thereby the specific and overt missionary dimension in theological education.

Reflection XII

The Importance of the Scriptures as the Intellectual/Spiritual Centre of all Theology

Because missions have gained completely new horizons in a global world which has become relativistic, the apologetic task of theology has become almost boundless. Thus the question of the real core of theological studies is an increasingly important issue. We have already referred several times to the function of learning by the use of models. Because our world has become so complex and multi-layered, it is quite easy for students to lose themselves in the boundlessness of the teaching material. It is impossible to become completely acquainted with all religions, philosophies, and theological ideas.

In the Information Age, it is important to have a strong intellectual centre for studies. The Scriptures are this for us. In the multiplication of words, we ask for the one eternally true Word. 'Blessed are those whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they mediate day and night' (Psalm 1:1-2).

The study of the theology must be structured according to a hierarchy of priorities. Therefore, in the centre of studies for all students must be the very intensive study of the entire

New Testament; then comes the through and broad knowledge of the Old Testament; next, the foundational creeds and documents from church history, followed by solid knowledge of some conservative, biblical theological systems. Only thereafter comes the acquaintance with a liberal method, using models showing its consequences. Finally, besides basic overview knowledge in philosophy and comparative religions, it is important to have knowledge of the most important cultural influences of the geographic area where one will later serve as a pastor or evangelist.

Theological studies which are not clearly structured in their curricula in a hierarchical way lose themselves; they have no real organizing centre, and fundamental defects will show up later. The link between theoretical knowledge and the abilities needed for practical service should be guaranteed by closely dovetailing academic education with periods of practical training, appropriately spaced out and under well-guided supervision.

Reflection XIII

The Fruit of the Absurd and the Gift of Truth

Post-Modern relativizing of truth is well suited to be a model for studying the way a fundamentally unbiblical mode of thinking develops. Modernity's belief in reason is led *ad absurdum* through Post-Modernity; at the end of this historical process reason cancels itself out in irrationality, emotionalism, or in pragmatism. In today's western world, Post-Modernity is seen as the dominant cultural reaction to Modernity. Humanity cannot, however, live for-

ever in a realm of total absurdity. In view of this situation, it should be even more clear in theological education what a gift it is to have truth from the outside, that is, from God's revelation. 'The truth will make you free' (John 8:32) The meaning of these words of Jesus can be shown quite clearly in the history of western philosophy and ideas.

Reflection XIV

The Positive Task of Missionary Apologetics

The goal of apologetic work is not primarily contesting non-Christian religion and worldviews with the use of rational arguments. However,

according to 2 Cor. 10:5, 'We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.' (Cf. Col. 2:15). Thus, even this destructive aspect is a part of theology. Instead, the aim of Apologetics is to invite people to come to Jesus in a winsome way so that those of other religions find the gospel is attractive. Ultimately, theology is always about giving well-founded and edifying testimony to the truth according to the apostolic admonition: 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have' (1 Pet. 3:15).

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'The Most Moved Mover': Abraham Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos in response to the 'Unmoved Mover' of Traditional Theism

Dennis Ngien

Keywords: Pathos, passibility, impassibility, suffering, *apatheia*, sympathy, essence, ontology, psychology, wrath, mercy

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Born in Warsaw, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-72) was educated thoroughly in Bible and Jewish writings. He suffered through the Holocaust as a victim, and was later compelled to emigrate to the United States because of German persecution. In his Berlin doctoral dissertation on prophetic consciousness, *The Prophets* (1937), he wrote very passionately against the traditional theistic conceptions of God, specifically that of divine impassibility. Jewish and Christian theologians, according to him, have traditionally assumed divine impassibility as 'the fundamental principle' in their doctrine of God.¹ The notion of divine impassibility, however, is more philo-

¹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 254.

sophical than biblical.² 'If God is a being of absolute self-sufficiency, then the entire world outside Him can in no way be relevant to Him.'³ This abstract God stands 'aloof from the affairs of man', existing in transcendent calm and having no contact with a world external to himself. The deity is thus an apathetic God, the Wholly Other, distant, shrouded in his unfathomable darkness, and is essentially irrelevant and unrelated to humanity. However, in the prophetic corpus of the Hebrew Bible, the question of 'divine pathos', which Heschel understood as the divine relatedness to humanity, is paramount. 'The supreme issue', he argued, 'is not the question whether in the infinite darkness there is the ground of being which is an object of man's ultimate concern, but whether the reality of God confronts us with a pathos.'⁴ The nearness of God permeates the Hebrew Bible. It is precisely in divine pathos that God and

humanity meet, and that the chasm between them is overcome.

The purpose of this essay is to expound Heschel's theology of divine pathos and defend it against the idea of divine impassibility, accentuating it as 'a more plausible view of ultimate reality'.⁵ I shall first examine the basis of theology's rejection of the suffering God, and then explore Heschel's doctrine of divine pathos, showing that the God of Israel is not the 'Unmoved Mover' of traditional theism, but rather in Fritz Rothschild's salient description, 'the Most Moved Mover'.⁶ The God, whom the prophets face is a God of compassion, a God of concern and involvement, and One who is most moved by the actions and fate of humanity. This will finally be explored in the various strata of the Old Testament, with special attention to certain specific theological perspectives within the canon. After presenting the biblical basis Heschel uses to advance his position, I will conclude with a discussion on the contemporary relevance of his concept of divine pathos for Christian life and ministry.

I The Greek Doctrine of Divine Impassibility (*apatheia*)

Christianity's embrace of impassibility stemmed from two Greek metaphysical concepts: apathy (*apatheia*)

² See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) and his *History and the Triune God*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroads, 1992). While writing his noteworthy book *The Crucified God*, Moltmann observed that Jewish writers had already been discussing the theme of God's suffering (p. 267). In *History and the Triune God*, he acknowledged the impact the Jewish theologian Abraham Heschel had had upon his theological understanding of the suffering God: 'My first discovery was the Jewish concept of the pathos of God with which Abraham Heschel has interpreted the message of the *Shekinah*, the indwelling of God in the persecuted and suffering people of God...' (p. 172). See also John Jaeger, 'Abraham Heschel and The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann,' *Perspectives on Religious Studies* 24 (1997), pp. 167-178, where he focused on the apparent parallels between Heschel and Moltmann.

³ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 232.

⁴ Abraham Heschel, 'The Jewish Notion of God and Christian Renewal,' *Renewal of Religious Thought*, Vol. I of *Theology of Renewal*, ed. by L.K. Shook (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 107. Also cited in Merkle, 'Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos,' p. 74.

⁵ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 247.

⁶ Fritz A. Rothschild, ed., *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism from the Writings of Abraham J. Heschel*, rev.ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1975) pp. 25 & 89.

and sufficiency (*autarkeia*).⁷ Apathy denotes incapacity of experiencing passion or feeling. For Aristotle, that which characterizes God's nature is immateriality and pure reason. This immaterial God of pure reason is insensitive to passion or feeling. To experience passion means to be acted upon from without. Aristotle therefore assumes God to be, by nature, apathetic. Divine apathy similarly undergirds the Christian denial of divine passibility. Divine sufficiency also reinforces the Greek conviction that no external agent affects or moves God. Furthermore, Aristotle's self-sufficient God lacks or needs nothing. 'Satisfying conditions of insufficiency requires that some being affect or move the individual who experiences deficiency.'⁸ Furthermore, Aristotle's God is a completely actual God, and thus has no potential for change. Aristotle excluded his self-sufficient God from movement, and he thus understood God's nature as immutable.

Aquinas, following the Aristotelian tradition, saw potentiality as a kind of imperfection. Any potentiality in God's being would detract him from his perfection. God is pure act. While God can act, he cannot be acted upon; God moves us, while remaining unmoved. God is the 'Unmoved Mover', 'the first cause of all things'.⁹

The attributes of immutability and impassibility are closely related, but not equivalent. Immutability suggests that God does not change in any way, even from within, while impassibility suggests the impossibility of God being affected by any other realities, even in the emotional sense. Because the Greeks pursued pure reason as a human ideal, they did not evaluate emotions positively. The Stoic Zeno, for one, regarded emotions as 'diseases of the soul', irrational experiences by which the mind is passively swayed, resulting in sin and suffering.¹⁰ Emotions ought to be subject to the rational mind, thus safeguarding its undisturbed rational operation. God's love for the world is to be understood not as a feeling, or a relationship in which he can be affected by what he loves, but as merely his benevolent attitude. The human ideal of apathy governs the way in which both Greek philosophy and Christian theology influenced by it conceive of God. What is disapproved of in humanity cannot be attributed to God. Therefore suffering and passion, which are characteristic of humans, are both inapplicable to the nature of a God who never becomes, but eternally is.

In theism, accepting any one of the attributes mentioned above logically or necessarily implies accepting the entire package.¹¹ Governed by this basic assertion, the divine impassibility is closely linked with other aspects of the Greek understanding of God.

⁷ John Russell, 'Impassibility and Pathos in Barth's Idea of God', *Anglican Theological Review* LXX (1988), p. 222. See also Francis House, 'The Barrier of Impassibility', *Theology* 83 (1980) 410-411; Colin Grant, 'Possibilities for Divine Passibility', *Toronto Journal of Theology* 4 (1988), pp. 6-8; T. E. Pollard, 'The Impassibility of God', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8 (1955), pp. 353-364; Richard Bauckham, 'Only the Suffering God can help': divine passibility in modern theology', *Themelios* 9 (1984), p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233

⁹ *Summa Theologia* 1.13.5 in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2 volumes, trans. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, 1945), pp. 8-25.

¹⁰ Marcel Sarot, 'Divine Suffering: Continuity and Discontinuity with the Tradition', *Anglican Theological Review* LXXVIII (1996), p. 226.

¹¹ See David Griffin, *God, and power and Evil: a Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 73. He identified at least eight logically connected attributes in the writings of Aquinas, which constitute 'the essential core of theism'.

Suffering is connected with time, change and matter, which are features of this material world of becoming. But God is eternal in the sense of atemporal. He is also, of course, incorporeal. He is absolute, fully actualized perfection, and therefore simply is eternally what he is. He cannot change because any change (even change which he wills rather than change imposed on him from outside) could change only for the worse. Since he is self-sufficient, he cannot be changed. Since he is perfect, he cannot change himself.¹²

The Greek understanding of divine 'unconditionedness' undergirded the concept of divine impassibility.¹³ They argued that because God is unconditional, he must be incapable of suffering, for suffering is always caused by something. God is perfect, so he cannot suffer from some aspect of his being. If God were to suffer, he would have to suffer from or under an outside force. But that would make him contingent upon something outside of himself. God's benevolent will cannot be swayed by passions nor his eternal blissfulness be interrupted.

It was mainly the influence of Greek Metaphysics that prompted the early Christians to adopt the

notion of divine impassibility.¹⁴ Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Parmenides and the Stoics developed an understanding of God as the Absolute monad, self-sufficient, immutable, impassible and static. These categories, which continue through the patristic and medieval periods, have been assumed by early Christian theologians to describe God. More specifically, the idea of divine impassibility held its grip on what may or may not be said of the Christian God. It erected, as Moltmann noted, 'an intellectual barrier against the recognition of the suffering of Christ, for a God who is subject to suffering like all other beings cannot be God'.¹⁵ The Fathers accepted the concept of divine impassibility, the notion that God cannot suffer since God stands outside the realm of human pain or sorrow. Philo, the Hellenistic Jewish theologian, had already assumed this in his understanding of Israel's God.¹⁶ Virtually all the early church Fathers took it for granted, denying God any emotions because they

¹² Bauckham, "Only the Suffering God can help", pp. 7-8. See also R. B. Edwards, 'The Pagan Doctrine of the Absolute Unchangeableness of God', *Religious Studies* 14 (1978), pp. 305-313.

¹³ Sarot, 'Divine Suffering', p. 226.

¹⁴ For further studies on the influence of Greek ideas upon classical Christianity, see Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reeve, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 104-106; Marcel Sarot, *God, Passibility and Corporeality* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992), pp. 32-35; Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church* (London: William and Norgate, 1892), pp. 3-4; pp. 114-115; Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology', in *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol.2., trans. George H. Kehm (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 119-183.

¹⁵ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 228

¹⁶ Bauckham, "Only the Suffering God can help", p. 7.

would interrupt his tranquillity.¹⁷ For instance, Gregory of Nazianzus, even though constrained by the Alexandrian Christology to ascribe the sufferings of Jesus to the Logos, could speak of God's suffering only by a paradox, that 'by the sufferings of Him who could not suffer, we were taken up and saved'.¹⁸ This usually means that the Logos, though aware of the sufferings of his human nature, is untouched by them. The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) declared 'as vain babblings' the idea that the divinity could suffer, and it condemned those who believed it.¹⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan goes so far as to maintain that divine impassibility was 'a presupposition of all Christological doctrine.'²⁰ Like most theologians of Chalcedonian and earlier times, Calvin—and Reformed theology after him—assumed divine impassibility. The Westminster Confession of Faith explicitly asserted that God is 'without body, parts,

or passions, immutable'.²¹

II Beyond Theism: Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos

Heschel sought to emancipate the biblical understanding of God from the categories imposed on it by Greek philosophy. In order to move beyond theism's idea of divine *apatheia*, he developed from the Old Testament prophets a theology of divine pathos. He affirmed that divine pathos is 'the central idea in prophetic theology', and is 'the summary of Jewish theology'.²² By pathos he meant God's passionate and intimate 'concern' for humanity, even to the point of being stirred and affected by human activity and conditions in which humanity dwells. He called this concern 'transitive concern'.²³ Divine pathos constitutes 'the unity of the eternal and the temporal.' 'It is the real basis of the relation between God and man, of the correlation of Creator and creation, of the dialogue of the Holy One of Israel and His people.'²⁴ Divine pathos referred to God's outward relationship with his people, to the 'situation' in which God involves himself in sharing the history of his people. The Hebrew Bible reveals a

¹⁷ For further discussions of the early Church fathers on the impassibility-passibility debate, see John Mozley, *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926); Joseph Hallman, *The Descent of God: Divine Suffering in History and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Warren McWilliams, *The Passion of God: Divine Suffering in Contemporary Theology* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985); Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's 'Theologia Crucis'* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995).

¹⁸ *Theological Orations* 4:5 as cited in Pollard, 'The Impassibility of God', p. 359.

¹⁹ J. Stevenson, *Creeeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church A.D. 337-461* (London: SPCK, 1966), p. 336. Also quoted in William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p. 5.

²⁰ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 270-271.

²¹ Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 2, *Book of Confessions*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 6.011 as cited in Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God*, p. 6.

²² Abraham Joshua Heschel, 'Teaching Jewish Theology in the Solomon Schechter Day School', *The Synagogue School* 28 (1969), pp. 4-33. See John C. Merkle, 'Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos', in *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring His Life and Thought*, ed. John C. Merkle (New York: Macmillan/London: Collier Macmillan, 1985), p. 67.

²³ Abraham Heschel, *Man is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951), p. 245.

²⁴ Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*, p. 231.

God who earnestly desires fellowship with humanity. 'God's dream is not to be alone', but 'to have mankind as a partner in the drama of continuous creation.'²⁵ It is in this context that Heschel said that God 'needed' human beings.²⁶ Heschel explains this divine-human intimacy:

To the prophet, . . . God does not reveal himself in an abstract absoluteness, but in a personal and intimate relation to the world. He does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the world, and reacts accordingly . . . Quite obviously in the biblical view, man's deeds may move Him, affect Him, grieve Him or, on the other hand, gladden and please Him. This notion that God can be intimately affected, that He possesses not merely intelligence and will, but also pathos, basically defines the prophetic consciousness of God.²⁷

Heschel recognized that the static idea of Greek deity is the outcome of two major presuppositions: 'the ontological notion of stability and the psychological view of the emotion as disturbances of the soul'.²⁸ He repudiated each of these strands of thought, seeing them as contrary to the 'Most moved mover' of Israel.

Pathos and Ontology

The Greeks assumed Parmenides' static view of ultimate reality, and this influenced their concept of God: 'according to Greek thinking, impassivity and immobility are characteristic of the divine.'²⁹ Any movement in God's being is illusory. Change is viewed as a sign of imperfection. God's true being is 'that which 'always is' and 'never becomes': it is

'ever immutably the same'.³⁰ Responding to the 'Eleatic' ontology of Parmenides and to theology influenced by it, Heschel wrote:

The Eleatic premise that true being is unchangeable and that change implies imperfection is valid only in regard to being as reflected in the mind. Being in reality, being as we encounter it, implies movement. If we think of being as something beyond and detached from beings, we may well arrive at an Eleatic notion. An ontology, however, concerned with beings as involved in all beings or as the source of all beings, will find it impossible to separate being from action or movement, and thus postulate a dynamic concept of divine being... Biblical ontology does not separate being from doing. What is, acts. The God of Israel is a God who acts, a God of mighty deeds... Here the basic category is action rather than immobility. Movement, creation of natures, acts within history rather than absolute transcendence and detachment from the events of history, are the attributes of the Supreme Being.³¹

Divine pathos, said Heschel, is 'not a name for God's essence';³² it is 'functional' rather than 'substantial'.³³ It belongs to the realm of God's relatedness.³⁴ His emphasis is on how God acts in relation to his creatures, not on how God may be in himself. 'The Bible does not say how He is (in Himself), but how he acts

³⁰ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 261.

³¹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 261.

³² Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 231.

³³ Heschel, *The Prophets* *ibid.*

³⁴ For further discussions of whether duality exists in Heschel's doctrine of God, see Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 111-112; Lawrence Perlman, *Abraham Heschel's Idea of Revelation* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), pp. 91-101; Eliezer Berkovits, 'Dr. A. J. Heschel's Theology of Pathos', *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought* 6 (1969), pp. 67-104, and *Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism* (New York: Ktav, 1974), pp. 192-224; Merkle, 'Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos', pp. 75-81.

²⁵ Abraham Heschel, *Who is Man?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 119.

²⁶ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 235.

²⁷ Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp. 223-224.

²⁸ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 260.

²⁹ Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*, p. 65

(towards us).³⁵ 'God in Himself, His Being, is a problem for metaphysics.'³⁶ Classical metaphysics speculates upon God's 'inmost' essence apart from God's pathos in history. For prophetic theology, being as an ontological category is to be apprehended in relation, not in essence. Heschel made a distinction between God's essence, into which one cannot pry, and God's pathos, in which God and humanity meet most intimately.

This distinction poses a limit for a proper discourse about God. God as he is in himself was not the God with whom we have to do because this God was not preached, not revealed, and not worshipped. God in essence, in his own nature and Supreme Majesty, is beyond us, and theology must observe this limit. He warned against any speculative incursion into God as he is in himself, but pointed us rather to God's functional relatedness to humanity where he is to be apprehended. Because God chose to be found in his outward relation with humanity, the prophets dwelled on 'a dynamic modality,' on the actual concrete relationship that God has towards them.³⁷

The prophets did not discuss God 'as He is in Himself, as ultimate being'.³⁸ God in essence is 'above and beyond all revelation.'³⁹ 'God cannot be distilled to a well-defined idea. All concepts fail when applied to His essence.'⁴⁰ What God discloses is not his 'essence'. 'He commu-

nicates only His pathos, His will.'⁴¹ Here Heschel's terminologies seemed to drive a wedge between God's 'inmost' essence and his 'outward' actions, pushing God into a realm from whence no revelation ever proceeds. Apparently Heschel failed at times to reach clarity in this area.⁴² Despite this, he expressly affirmed that God's being is known through his acts: 'For of God we know only what He means and does in relation to man.' 'God as turned toward man' is known to the prophet.⁴³ God's being is known through his intentionality and his interaction with humanity. He firmly stated that the object of prophetic revelation is not God's impenetrable 'essence', but God's revealed 'pathos'. And yet it is really 'God Himself' who relates to humanity. This is in line with biblical ontology which does not drive a wedge between being and act. Speculative ontology based on pure being is thus given up in favour of biblical ontology.

The identity of God is inseparable from his operations. As Heschel put it, 'What is, acts.' God's being corresponds to God's acts. God's being is

⁴¹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 485.

⁴² Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp. 484-485. 'It is improper', Heschel informed his readers, 'to employ the term "self-revelation" in regard to biblical prophecy.' He argues that 'God never reveals Himself'. Heschel did not like the term 'self-revelation'; he called it a revelation of divine pathos. Heschel's phraseology such as 'God never reveals himself' seems to push God to a realm from whence no revelation ever proceeds. Did he mean that there really is no direct revelation from God to humanity? And must we, on the other hand, understand him to say that this same God who is hidden in himself ('beyond and above all revelation') is also so wrapped up in history that we may speak of 'history in God', and of 'an event in the life of God'? Heschel would have rendered us a great service had he elaborated upon these questions.

⁴³ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 485.

³⁵ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 262.

³⁶ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 484.

³⁷ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 229.

³⁸ Abraham Heschel, 'Prophetic Inspiration: An Analysis of Prophetic Consciousness', *Judaism* 11 (Winter 1962), p. 7.

³⁹ Heschel, 'Prophetic Inspiration', p. 7.

⁴⁰ Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*, p. 108.

found in his acts of pathos, in his covenantal participation and involvement with humanity. Who God is, is the result of what he does, and what he does, is to act lovingly towards the objects of divine concern. To put it in Heschel's terms, God's concern, not God's rule, motivates his activity. God is truly involved in the lives of humanity, to the extent that human acts truly affect his being. 'Whatever man does affects not only his own life, but also the life of God insofar as it is directed to man.'⁴⁴ In divine pathos the Almighty goes out of himself, and in the fellowship of his covenant with Israel, God becomes capable of suffering. Thus the prophets could speak of the 'history in God', and 'of an event in the life of God'.⁴⁵ Suffering action is taken up into God's very being.

Critics have argued that Heschel, for all his efforts to avoid describing God's essence, seems to have done just that.⁴⁶ 'God's participation in human history', he argued, 'finds its deepest expression in the fact that God can actually suffer.'⁴⁷ God is so thoroughly woven into history that he allows himself to suffer under it. This motivated Berkovits to argue that in spite of Heschel's reluctance to think of God's innermost essence, suffering, a function of God's concern, is thus carried into the life of God. Heschel's theology did not admit a duality of the impassible essence and suffering action in his doctrine of God. Berkovits explained: 'The life-giving significance of God's relatedness to the

world is not in the act of relatedness but in the fact that it is God who relates himself to it. It is the very essence of God, God as he exists in his absoluteness and perfection, that determines the value of his care for man.'⁴⁸ Heschel informed us of this: 'For all the impenetrability of His being, He is concerned with the world and relates Himself to it.'⁴⁹ It is in divine pathos that the gulf between God and humanity is overcome.

Heschel's understanding of God as self-moving or as moved by concern for others inevitably separates him from the unmoved mover of theism. The divine pathos which the prophets expressed in many ways constituted 'the modes of His reaction to Israel's conduct which would change if Israel modified its ways'.⁵⁰ This does not mean that God in essence changes. Heschel clearly distinguishes between a changeless essence and a changing intentionality. Divine pathos is 'not a name for His essence'.

What is changed is the structure of divine pathos, not God's being. For fear of limiting God's sovereignty and freedom, Heschel refused to attribute God's passion to God's ultimate being. Divine pathos is 'not an essential attribute of God'; it is 'an expression of God's will'.⁵¹ If it were God's essential attribute, then God would be coerced to act in certain ways based on his pathic nature. 'God Himself is not pathos', but is a 'subject of pathos'.⁵² Yet being this

⁴⁴ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 226.

⁴⁵ Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp. 277 & 437; cf. Heschel, *God in search of Man* (New York: Crossroads, 1955), pp. 174-175.

⁴⁶ See note 34.

⁴⁷ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 232.

⁴⁸ Berkovits, *Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 204.

⁴⁹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 228.

⁵⁰ Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*, p. 245.

⁵¹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 231. See Perlman, *Abraham Heschel's Idea of Revelation*, pp. 93-94.

⁵² Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 485.

'subject' who involves himself in human life, God must be passible. Given that 'biblical ontology does not separate being and act', God must be capable of being affected or moved, and thereby capable of varied modes of reaction depending upon human situations. In Merkle's reading of Heschel:

Pathos may not be an 'essential attribute of God,' but Heschel would have to admit that passibility is. For pathos is only possible in a being that is in essence passible. But this does not mean that the divine essence is changeable. The fact that God's modes of reacting to the world are changeable does not mean that God changes in essence. To be in essence passible is not the same as to have a passible essence. To be in essence passible is to be by nature a being who may change modes of action and reaction; to have a passible essence is to have a changing nature—for example, now human, now divine, or now living, now inanimate. God's nature may be immutable while the modes of God's being-in-relation may change.⁵³

Philosophically, a suffering God is an imperfect being who necessarily seeks his perfection and tries to overcome his deficiency through actions. The Bible is not concerned with that kind of perfection. The Hebrew concept of God, in contrast, is a passionate God who is infinitely charged with 'transitive concern'. God is so eager to express his concern for the people of his covenantal love that he suffers under their actions. And yet God suffers not out of any lack in himself, but out of his will to express his inexhaustible pathos for people. The immutability of God is understood not in terms of the divine per-

fection of Greek metaphysics; rather it is understood in terms of the Hebrew's belief in the constancy of God's faithfulness to his covenant.

The idea of self-sufficiency that it is unaffected or unmoved by external realities is no ideal in Hebrew thinking. 'Not self-sufficiency, but concern and involvement characterize His relation to the world.'⁵⁴ God's concern generates his activity on behalf of humanity. God is secure and trustworthy enough to be most moved by human situations. Biblically, God suffers change not because of any imperfection, but because different situations require different responses. This means that there is potentiality in God. God has the potential to be moved and to elicit responses not yet actual. This by no means implies that God's being is thereby perfected or enhanced or in the process of becoming more divine. Change is no sign of imperfection, but an aspect of his imperative concern for the world, the expressions of which are always subject to change.

Pathos and Psychology

In addition to Greek ontology, Greek psychology is also responsible for the rejection of the idea of divine suffering. Theists in the Aristotelian tradition, such as Maimonides or Thomas Aquinas, did not deny God's concern for humanity. What they denied was that God could be moved by the world. They conceived of God's concern merely as an intellectual act and benevolent attitude. This kind of concern, Heschel argued, does not signify a real genuine relationship because it is cold and remote. God's involvement with humanity is not

⁵³ Cf. John C. Merkle, *The Genesis of Faith: The Depth Theology of Abraham Joshua Heschel* (New York: Macmillan/London: Collier Macmillan, 1985), p. 133.

⁵⁴ Merkle, *The Genesis of Faith*, p. 235.

merely a benevolent attitude, but 'a feeling of intimate concern.'⁵⁵ 'He is a lover engaged to His people, not only a king. God stands in a passionate relationship to man.'⁵⁶

Heschel made a distinction between two kinds of concern: 'transitive' and 'reflexive'. The former focused on others whereas the latter focused on the self.⁵⁷ The pagan gods had only a reflexive, self-centred concern, a love dominated by self-seeking desires. The Israelite God had a selfless concern, a 'pure concern', sharing his boundless goodness without thought of return.⁵⁸ Pathos, which Heschel also characterizes as 'absolute selflessness' and 'undeserved love', is more divine than human. It is 'theomorphic'.⁵⁹

In discussing divine pathos, Heschel stressed the freedom of God. Israel's God gladly bestows his goodness, and does so only for the sake of the ones he loves. God determined within himself to be divinely loving, sharing his pure concern for humanity. Divine passion is an act which God brought to himself, allowing himself to be most moved by the actions of humanity. This involves 'no inner bondage, no enslavement to impulse, no subjugation by passion'.⁶⁰ Human deeds do not necessitate divine pathos, but only occasion it. Divine pathos is not an 'unreasoned emotion', but 'an act formed with intention, depending on free will, the result of decision and

determination'.⁶¹ It is God's glory to give, to act, and to love freely. In Heschel's schema, the immutability of God's freedom must be affirmed alongside of the passibility of God's pathos. In so doing he avoided attributing to God the unbridled and selfish passions which characterize humanity.

In so far as God is not subject to creaturely passions, God is impassible. But the Greeks were wrong to conclude from this that God has no passion. Greek psychology regards pathos, an emotion implying change, as an imperfection. Since pathos is an emotional reaction rather than an intellectual act, and it is aroused by an external agent, it is viewed as a sign of weakness. 'The dignity of man' lies primarily 'in the activity of the mind, in acts of self-determination'.⁶² Thus the Greeks radically dissociated reason from emotions, viewing them as sharply opposed to each other. To introduce emotion to God is to introduce change, and therefore to ascribe weakness to him, which, for them, would have seemed blasphemous. 'Such preference for reason', Heschel wrote, 'enabled Greek philosophy to exclude all emotion from the nature of Deity, while at the same time ascribing thought and contemplation to it.'⁶³

The perfect example of an impassive deity is the God of Aristotle. By identifying the Deity with the First Cause with something which, while it has the capacity of moving all things, is itself unmoved, Aristotle's Deity has no pathos, no needs. Ever resting in itself, its only activity is thinking, and its thinking is thinking of

⁵⁵ Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*, p. 244.

⁵⁶ Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*, p. 244.

⁵⁷ Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*, p. 245; cf. his *The Prophets*, pp. 225-226.

⁵⁸ Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*, p. 245.

⁵⁹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 271.

⁶⁰ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 254.

⁶¹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 224.

⁶² Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 248.

⁶³ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 250.

thinking. Indifferent to all things, it does not care to contemplate anything but itself. Things for it and thus are set in motion, yet they are left to themselves.⁶⁴

The Hebrew thinking, on the contrary, had a positive evaluation of emotion. In Heschel's terms: 'the mind is not a member apart, but is itself transformed into passion'.⁶⁵ 'Thought is part of emotion. We think because we are moved.' 'Emotion may be defined as the consciousness of being moved.'⁶⁶ 'Emotion can be reasonable just as reason can be emotional.'⁶⁷ Emotion is basic to the life of reason; it is also important to the life of action, because great acts are usually performed by those who are filled with passion.⁶⁸ Divine pathos, though an emotional response, is never devoid of God's reason and will, but informed by them.⁶⁹ Given this positive view of emotion in the Bible, Heschel rejected the dualistic framework of Greek metaphysics, that God could think but could not feel, that God could move, while remaining unmoved. Therefore, 'to the biblical mind the conception of God as detached and unemotional is totally alien'.⁷⁰

III Biblical Strata of Divine Pathos

Heschel gave priority to biblical texts rather than to the presuppositions of Greek philosophy. This section offers a synthesis of Heschel's understanding of the texts, showing how

he found justification for his view that God could fully experience the range of emotions.⁷¹ A detailed analysis of the texts is beyond the scope of this paper. However, in all fairness, Heschel's exposition of the theme of pathos is biblically grounded.

Amos' proclamation does not consist of 'an impersonal accusation', but proceeds from a living God who cares, 'a Redeemer who is pained by the misdeeds, the thanklessness of those whom He has redeemed'.⁷² The iniquities of God's people had aroused divine wrath against them. God cried out and roared in excitement and pain (Amos 1:2; cf. Isa.42:13-14). Amos' contemporaries were condemned because they had rejected the Torah, and had not kept God's statutes (Amos 2:4). Israel's election ought not to be 'mistaken as divine favoritism or immunity from chastisement'.⁷³ On the contrary, God's chosen ones are more seriously exposed to God's judgement. Divine justice in Amos's message is divine concern, not a 'stern mechanical justice'.⁷⁴ If the God in whose name Amos preached were a God of stern, mechanical justice, then long ago he would have nullified his covenant and abandoned Israel.

What transpires between God and his people is God's deepest affection for those whom he has known more intimately than any other people. Though Israel proved faithless, God called out to her, hoping that Israel might see her own failure and

⁶⁴ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 251.

⁶⁵ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 257.

⁶⁶ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 316.

⁶⁷ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 256.

⁶⁸ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 258.

⁶⁹ Merkle, *The Genesis of Faith*, p. 131.

⁷⁰ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 257.

⁷¹ For an Old Testament study of God's suffering, see Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

⁷² Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 32.

⁷³ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 32.

⁷⁴ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 35.

repent. Numerous times, God had sent into Israel warning portents, that she might take heed and return to God. And yet she did not return to God. Amos tried to convey the sense of God's mercy and disappointment over Israel's faithlessness in the song of lament, with its recurrent refrain, 'yet you did not return to me' (Amos 4:6-13). Having been shown in a vision the imminent destruction of Israel by locust or fire, Amos did not question divine justice. He appealed to divine mercy: 'O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee! How can Jacob stand? He is so small! The Lord repented concerning this; It shall not be, said the Lord' (Amos 7:2-3). At the heart of covenant lies God's everlasting love. God's wrath is less final than God's mercy. God's mercy will ultimately triumph over God's wrath; God's compassion prevails over justice (Amos 5:15). Mercy is a 'perpetual possibility',⁷⁵ and will ultimately conquer the 'contingency and non-finality' of wrath.⁷⁶ Thus the prophecy of Amos, which began with a message of doom, ended with an affirmation of hope (Amos 9:11ff).

Both Hosea and Jeremiah affirmed that God could be wounded. God grieved over his people even amidst his anger with them. For instance, God cried out concerning wayward Israel: 'How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? My heart recoils within me; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath' (Hos.11:8-9; cf. Jer.31:30).⁷⁷ Humanly speaking, in such a situation a complete abandonment is

expected. But God's love is such that it eternally attaches itself to his people. Hosea spoke of the modulation of divine feelings toward repentance, which is expressed most movingly: 'My heart is turned within me' (Hos.11:8; cf. 12:6). Yet he also said: 'Compassion remains hid from me' (Hos.13:14). How does one reconcile the antinomy between the tenderness of divine love and the severity of divine judgement? True love, Hosea saw, is not a love that overlooks easily the wickedness of the beloved, forgiving carelessly every sin. Rather it is 'a love grown bitter with the waywardness of man'.⁷⁸ Israel's God also 'has passionate love of right and a burning hatred of wrong'.⁷⁹ God's anger against sin is 'a tragic necessity, a calamity for man and grief for God'.⁸⁰ God was moved into wrath by human sin. The wrathful opposition against sin is not generated by some abstractly conceived justice of God, which demands retribution for the broken law; rather it is generated by God's burning desire for reunion, a pure, simple and undefiled relationship with Israel. God suffered the pain of a broken relationship with his beloved. Yet this pain sprang from God's resolve to love the object of his own wrath. The mingling of sorrow and love in God prevents the final ruin of his beloved. God's being is revealed in the way in which, amidst all the sorrow and anger, his redeeming love endures forever. Heschel captured this crucial point: 'Over and above the immediate and contingent emotional reaction of the Lord we are informed of an eternal and basic disposition' already indicated at the

⁷⁵ Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp. 35-36.

⁷⁶ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 285.

⁷⁷ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 48.

⁷⁸ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 50.

⁷⁹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 50.

⁸⁰ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 294.

beginning of the passage: 'I loved him' (Hos.11:1).⁸¹ The pathos of love, expressed first in the pain of distress, reached its climax in the final triumph of reconciliation. 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger has turned from him' (Hos.14:4). As such God's judgement is not final, but only a disciplinary means of leading people to repentance. Anger is a mode of God's responsiveness to humanity, showing that he cares.

Though anger is aroused by human sin, it is conditioned by God's will. Anger is not a childish loss of temper nor is it a frustrated love turned sour or vindictive. Rather, it is an expression of God's pure love, that does not allow him to stand by idly in the face of unrighteousness. Wrath is the purity of God's love burning hot in the face of wickedness. God's pure love expresses itself in a wrathful opposition against anything that stands between God and humanity so that their unity might not be severed. As a mode of pathos, God's wrath is to be understood as 'suspended love, as mercy withheld, as mercy in concealment'.⁸² Hidden in a severe 'no' is an assuring 'yes'. Anger generated by love is only 'an interlude', awaiting compassion to resume in its fullness. God's long-suffering love waits eagerly to overcome the contingency and non-finality of terrifying anger. Jeremiah 12: 14-15 confirmed this: 'I will pluck them from their land... and after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land' (cf. Jer.26:13). Heschel grasped the mysterious par-

adox of Hebrew faith:

Jeremiah had to be taught that God is greater than his decisions. The anger of the Lord is instrumental, hypothetical, conditional, and subject to his will. Let the people modify their line of conduct, and anger will disappear. Far from being an expression of 'petulant vindictiveness', the message of anger includes a call to return and to be saved. The call of anger is a call to cancel anger. It is not an expression of irrational, sudden, and instinctive excitement, but a free and deliberate reaction of God's justice to what is wrong and evil. For all its intensity, it may be averted by prayer. ...Its meaning is ...instrumental: to bring about repentance; its purpose and consummation is its own disappearance.⁸³

The opening speech of Isaiah, using parental imagery, contains a mixture of lament and accusation (Isa.1:2-3). It sets the tone for the subsequent utterances of the prophet. It deals not primarily with divine anger but with the divine sorrow in anger. The prophet pleads with us to identify with the plight of a father whose children have abandoned him.⁸⁴ The focus here is not on Israel's disobedience to an external moral code, but on a broken relationship between parent and child. The rebellion occurs, even in the face of the best fatherly care possible. The prophet expressed divine anguish over Israel's rebellion in the form of rhetorical questions, powerfully expressed in the song of the vineyard: 'What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Why did it yield wild grapes?' (Isa. 5:1-7; cf. Jer.2:21).

⁸¹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 48.

⁸² Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 295.

⁸³ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 286.

⁸⁴ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 80.

There is sorrow in divine anger. Commenting on Isaiah 30:18, 'Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you'; Heschel wrote that anger is not God's 'disposition', but a state He waits to overcome'.⁸⁵ God's anger, which is instrumental in purification, lasts only for a season. For when the Lord smites, he is both 'smiting and healing' (Isa.19:22). In anger, God's mercy is not abandoned, but merely suspended. God's mercy will finally triumph over his own wrath.

In a very little while my
indignation will come to an
end ...

Come, my people, enter your
chambers,

And shut your doors behind you;
Hide yourselves for a little while
Until the indignation is past.

(Isaiah 10:25; 26:20)

'The allusion to the Lord as "a woman in travail"', Heschel wrote, is 'the boldest figure used by any prophet (to) convey not only the sense of supreme urgency of His action, but also a sense of the deep intensity of His suffering'⁸⁶ (Isa.42:14). Of God's involvement in human pain, the prophet declares affirmatively: 'In all their affliction he was afflicted' (Isa.63:9).⁸⁷

Conclusions

In the Bible, God is revealed not as an onlooker but as a participant. God is concerned for and moved by humanity. What are the implications of recognizing the 'Most Moved Mover' as Israel's God?

First, it has profound implication for ethics. God seeks a response

from humanity that corresponds to the divine pathos. This response is sympathy. Heschel wrote:

The nature of man's response to the divine corresponds to the content of his apprehension of divine. When the divine is sensed as mysterious perfection, the response is one of fear and trembling; when sensed as absolute will, the response is one of unconditional obedience; when sensed as pathos, the response is one of sympathy.⁸⁸

'The prophet not only hears and apprehends the divine pathos; he is convulsed by it to the depths of his soul.'⁸⁹ He is 'inwardly transformed: his interior life is formed by the pathos of God'.⁹⁰ He, by sympathy with the divine pathos, is himself intimately involved in divine concern for his people. In this way, the prophet is a partner or associate rather than a mouthpiece or instrument of God. Just as divine *apatheia* has its anthropological corollary, so does divine pathos: 'The ideal state of the Stoic sage is apathy, the ideal state of the prophets is sympathy.'⁹¹

As opposed to *homo apathetikos* (apathetic man), the individual becomes *homo sympathetikos* (sympathetic man). His involvement in social justice, the passion with which he condemns injustice, is rooted in his sympathy with the divine pathos. Sympathy moves him out of the narrow confines of self-centredness. Sympathy is emotion, in the sense of motion, of movements, which motivates him to act on behalf of others. Thus sympathy is a precondition of moral actions. The church and the Christian life should be patterned after sympathy, which

⁸⁵ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 83.

⁸⁶ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 151.

⁸⁷ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 151.

⁸⁸ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 307.

⁸⁹ Heschel, *Between God and Man*, p. 125.

⁹⁰ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 319.

⁹¹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 258.

necessarily involves risk, pain, and loss. The church of a passionate God must exist in and for this world, accepting suffering itself as it cares for the needy, the sick, and the poor and seeks the liberation of the oppressed. In its moral behaviour, the church must reflect the person and righteous actions of God. This is what it means to live a life oriented towards 'the living reality of God'.⁹²

Second, God's pathos governs the life of the preacher. The tension between God's love and God's wrath awakes a corresponding tension in the heart of the prophet. God feels anguish for his people, but he also feels anger for them. Likewise, the prophet feels it, and lives it. These two opposing currents of intense emotion felt by Jeremiah are attributed to God. Commenting on Jeremiah 23:9, 'My heart is broken within me, all my bones tremble; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the Lord and his holy words', Heschel wrote: 'What convulsed the prophet's whole being was God. His condition was a state of suffering in sympathy with the divine pathos.'⁹³ The preacher must learn to identify both with God and with his people. This double sympathy inevitably leads to a painful conflict within the preacher's inner existence. Impassioned with the reality of divine wrath, Jeremiah, for one, pronounced judgement with a vehement indignation, while at the same time his heart was filled with tenderness and sensitivity to human suffering. His calling as a prophet required that he preached with severity; but at the same time he pitied his people. Heschel would concur with Calvin's

remarks on this dual sympathy:

Let then all teachers in the Church learn to put on these two feelings—to be vehemently indignant whenever they see the worship of God profaned, to burn with zeal for God and to show that severity which appeared in all the prophets, whenever due order decays—and at the same time to sympathize with miserable men, whom they see rushing headlong into destruction, and to bewail their madness and to interpose with God as much as is in them; in such a way, however, that their compassion render them not slothful or indifferent, so as to be indulgent to the sins of men.⁹⁴

Furthermore, the preacher's anger must truly reflect the divine pathos. He must have enough discernment to be angry about the right things, and yet have enough control to hold it in check. The task of the preacher is not to recommend that God should depart from his merciful forbearance, but that he test and purify (Jer. 5:1, 4ff.; 6:9ff). When Jeremiah's anger became stronger than God's anger, God had to correct him and remind him about the non-finality of anger. In response to Jeremiah's prayer, 'Avenge me on my persecutors' (15:15), the Lord said to him: 'If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is base, you shall be as my mouth' (15:19).⁹⁵ Bearing in mind that God is concerned about the disciplining, not destruction, of his adversaries, the preacher must avoid a hypertrophy of sympathy for God's wrath.

Prophetic suffering, in various kinds, results from the two-fold sym-

⁹² Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 322.

⁹³ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 118.

⁹⁴ John Calvin, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1950), pp. 329-330. Also quoted in Donald A. Leggett, *Loving God and Disturbing Men* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), p. 47.

⁹⁵ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 126.

pathy for God and for his people. Suffering is constitutive to the life of the preacher. However, the world must observe that he suffers not because of public scandal or vice, but because he holds to the Word of God, preaches it and practises it.

Third, prayer would lose its meaning if God were not responsive to human cries. If God remains unmoved by whatever we do, there is really very little point in doing one thing rather than the other. The apathetic God is impotent in bringing a change in human hearts because whatever humanity does, this God does not react or respond to it accordingly. However, the prophetic faith assumes a God whose attitude towards his people changes after his people repent and turn to him. Thus prayers make a difference not only in human lives but also in God's life. God desires humanity to be his conversation partner, and this provides a strong incentive for loving devotion. Prayer is not so much a duty for pleasing God as a delight at the heart of relationship. To pray is to enter into a living and loving relationship in which both parties influence each other. The reciprocal relationship of love into which God enters with humanity entails that God gives and receives from humanity.

The interaction between God and humanity does not occur simply on the intellectual level, nor in a law court; it occurs at the emotional level. God relates to humanity as 'a lover', who eagerly 'waits for (humanity) to seek Him'.⁹⁶ God takes human cries seriously, allowing them to affect his being and change his mind. Petitionary prayers may have

a contributive, though not determinative, effect on the outcome because they have an effect on God himself. In Heschel's schema, petitionary prayer is not the cause of God's response, but rather is the reason for his response.⁹⁷ God is not of any necessity to answer human requests, otherwise he would not be the One who acts from free choice. Because God is responsive, humanity can pray with confidence that he will be moved by human cries.

Finally, it provides an appropriate entry point for sharing the gospel. Divine pathos discloses 'the extreme pertinence of man to God'.⁹⁸ Divine concern moves God to come to humanity, thus abolishing his distance from humanity. God does not conceive of humanity as an idea in his mind but as a concern, as 'a divine secret' (Ps.139:7-18). This means that humanity lives in the 'perpetual awareness of being perceived, apprehended, noted by God, of being an object of the divine Subject'.⁹⁹ An apathetic God, who

⁹⁷ For further discussions of prayer, see Terrance Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer* (Illinois: InterVarsity, 2000); Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Peter R. Baelz, *Prayer and Providence: A Background Study* (New York: Seabury, 1968); David Basinger, 'Why Petition an Omnipotent, Omniscient, Wholly Good God?' *Religious Studies* 19 (1983), pp. 25-41. Clark H. Pinnock, in John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach and Clark Pinnock, *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, ed. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Dowers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 15 where he states: 'God actually accepts the influence of our prayers in making up his mind. ...Future events are not predetermined and fixed. If you believe that prayer changes things, my whole position is established. If you do not believe it does, you are far from biblical religion.'

⁹⁶ Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, p. 39. Cf. his *Man is not Alone*, p. 244.

⁹⁸ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 483.

⁹⁹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 483.

dwells in the transcendent and lonely splendour of eternity, strips humanity of 'dignity and grandeur', striking them with a sense of 'poverty and emptiness'.¹⁰⁰ What consolation could such a God offer if he is too sublime to be moved by events on this earth? Of what help to wounded humanity is a God who knows nothing of pain himself? Furthermore this conception of God could easily give rise to atheism.

On the contrary, Israel's God is not remote from human struggles in history. God takes humanity so seriously that he attaches himself to human situations. God, in Whitehead's

famous phrase, is 'the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands'.¹⁰¹ That God who is understood as a suffering participant in human history would less likely be criticized as a deceiver, executioner, sadist and despot. It might reduce the intensity of the atheistic objections to belief in God. It might also enable the unbelievers to hear the gospel, and eventually to find faith. God feels for humanity; he cares! God is most supremely divine in his intimate concern for human agony. And that, surely, is the best news worth sharing.

¹⁰⁰ Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp. 258-259.

¹⁰¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 532.

Where Wrath and Mercy Meet

Editor: David Peterson

The cross of Jesus is central to evangelical Christianity. Yet the theology of atonement is under attack, not only from those outside the evangelical fold, but also from those within who challenge the doctrine of penal substitution.

In this collection of papers, delivered at the Oak Hill College Annual School of Theology 2000, four members of the faculty defend a strong articulation of penal substitution in the face of contemporary challenges. **David Peterson** surveys the atonement in both Old and New Testaments; **Garry Williams** examines the nature of punishment at the heart of a penal doctrine; **Michael Ovey** expounds how sin is the 'de-creation' of God's world; and **Paul Weston** reflects on John's Gospel and the lessons it provides on proclaiming the cross today. The collection is then completed with an appendix on justification by faith by a former vice-principal of Oak Hill, **Alan Stibbs**.

'Thank God that someone is prepared to cut through all the therapeutic nonsense written about this issue and present a solid, biblical case for an atonement which places penal and substitutionary categories at its very heart. David Peterson and the staff at Oak Hill have placed all those who love the truth in their debt.'

Carl Trueman, Senior Lecturer in Church History, University of Aberdeen.

David Peterson is the Principal of Oak Hill College and has written amongst other volumes 'Possessed by God'.

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A Survey of the Theology Of Work

Charles A. Metteer

Keywords: Providence, creation, obligation, prayer, fulfilment, dignity, achievement, service, motivation, charity, community

For most of us, work takes up the major part of our waking lives. We normally break our sleep so that we can meet our responsibilities in a timely manner. Frequently, we move from one task to another until we retire at the end of the day. Many of us have so much work to do that the quality of our work suffers. Yet whether we are involved primarily in intellectual work, housework, physical labour, or a mixture of duties, our work-related activities require most

of our energy. Not surprisingly, our situations can prompt us to ask several questions with respect to our Christian faith. What do theology and Scripture have to say about human work? Is there a spiritual dimension to work or does it have only economic and social value? Can we make any applications to our current circumstances?

Despite the central role that work has in our day-to-day lives, in general there is surprisingly little theological reflection on this topic. For example, major theological works such as John Calvin's *Institutes* and Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* directly address the topic of work in relatively small sections.¹ In addition, our churches generally fail to help us connect our religious confession

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¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, one-volume edition; reprint 1995), III, vii and III, x; and Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I, 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. Harold Knight and G. T. Thompson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961; latest impression 1978), 3.1, 6.3, and vol. III, 4, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 53.1, 55.3, & 56.2.

with our working lives. Thus, we are left with a gap between our faith and practice. In this article, I will attempt to bring greater congruence between these two by surveying several aspects of the theology of work. Because this topic is so broad, I must limit my investigation. Instead of attempting a comprehensive theological analysis of work, I will simply give summary attention to a number of representative themes, viz., providence, obligation, worship, personal fulfilment, and service. I will also minimize the use of non-Christian, e.g., Marxist, sources.

For the purposes of definition, I propose that *work* covers the entire range of constructive and purposeful human endeavours apart from activities such as sleep, play, recreation, and eating. It includes paid employment, volunteer work, spontaneous charity, academic studies, and domestic duties. Whereas work encompasses manual and intellectual tasks, *labour* is confined to physical efforts and connotes, more properly, the difficulties and hardships in what we usually designate as toil. From here on, I will use the word *work*, except when context requires the use of *labour*.

Providence

The work of divine providence encompasses everything that God does to order and maintain the universe (e.g., see Ps. 104:10-23, 27-28). In addition to redemptive and creative work, this includes 'conserving, sustaining, and replenishing'²

² Robert J. Banks, 'The Place of Work in the Divine Economy: God as Vocational Director and Model,' in *Faith Goes to Work: Reflections from the Marketplace*, ed. Robert J. Banks (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1993), p. 24.

the world and human life in a way that all may benefit. One way in which God accomplishes these objectives is through human work, i.e., by providing goods and services for others and in caring for the visible world, people participate in God's providential work. In two major respects, this is a more fruitful concept than that of 'co-creation'—the idea that people are co-creators with God because their work 'cooperates with God in *creatio continua*'.³ First, creative work is often not readily discernable in everyday life. Consequently, the only way to make sense of many mundane activities, e.g., household chores, is to view them as part of God's providence.⁴ Second, Karl Barth contends that people cannot participate in God's creative work because the first humans never witnessed it, but were themselves its 'final object'. Indeed, Scripture never suggests that human work is creative in the same sense as God's.⁵

A vivid portrayal of this providential partnership occurs in Genesis 2:5, where the absence of plant life pointed to the relationship between

³ Miroslav Volf, 'Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation: Toward a Pneumatological Understanding of Work,' *Pneuma* 9 (Fall, 1987):174.

⁴ Robert J. Banks, *Redeeming the Routines: Bringing Theology to Life* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1993), p. 140. See also Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York & Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 101-102.

⁵ The quote is from Barth, vol. III, 4, 53.1 (p. 52). See also Alan Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work* (London: SCM Press, 1952), pp. 17-20. Jürgen Moltmann offers the insightful qualification that although people cannot fashion something out of nothing, they can act in ways that are 'unexchangeable and unrepeatable' ('The Right to Meaningful Work,' chap. in *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks [London: SCM Press, 1984], p. 50).

divine and human work: 'Now no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth; and there was no man to cultivate the ground.' Plant growth required cooperation between God who sent rain and people who worked the soil.

This divine-human partnership is based on a covenantal relationship in which God takes the lead. On the one hand, people must look to God for help in all their undertakings. For instance, the psalmist graphically depicted the extent to which workers were dependent upon God: 'Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it' (Ps. 127:1). On the other hand, God chooses in part to use human assistance. Luther stated that human work is actually 'the work of our Lord God under mask, as it were, beneath which he himself alone effects and accomplishes what we desire.'⁶ For instance, God fashions new life through parents, feeds people through farmers and distribution systems, and orders human life through political and social systems. Thus, human work is not a contingent activity arising from human need or misery. Rather, the purpose of human work is 'God's purpose in creation and governance'.⁷

Because work is a divine trust committed to people for the fulfilling of the divine plan, it may be viewed as possessing an inherent dignity. Correspondingly, through work, people can affirm their unique posi-

tion as God's ambassadors on earth. As the cultivators and preservers of God's vast resources, they are to seek the welfare of all life forms and not merely satisfy their own needs and wants.⁸ On another level, God has given people different abilities and interests in order to meet the broad range of human needs, e.g., food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, and protection. Consequently, even though work is often laborious, unchallenging, and unrelated to personal interests and strengths, people may see it as a service to God if it is done to sustain and order God's creation.⁹

Obligation

Work as an act of survival

People are generally forced by necessity to work. Whereas work is divinely given to them as a 'means of survival', it is with few exceptions also a 'condition for survival'.¹⁰ Thus, although they need to remember that they cannot 'live on bread alone' (Lk. 4:4; cf. Mt. 4:4, [Dt. 8:3]), they need no reminding that they cannot live without bread either. Along this line, Paul's charge, 'If anyone will not work, neither let him eat' (2 Thess. 3:10), was based on the underlying principle that if no one works, no one will eat. Fortunately, God has made people feel hunger

⁶ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, *The Christian in Society*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann, trans. Walter I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), p. 331.

⁷ Edwin G. Kaiser, *Theology of Work* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1966), p. 54.

⁸ Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of this World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 48.

⁹ Jacques Ellul, 'Working and Calling,' *Katallagette* 4 (Fall—Winter 1972), 9. John Paul II carefully makes this same point in *Laborem Exercens*, in *The Papal Encyclicals: 1958-1981*, ed. Claudia Carlen Ihm (Raleigh, NC: McGrath, 1981), p. 115.

¹⁰ Ellul, 'Working and Calling,' p. 13.

which, in turn, motivates them to provide for their bodily needs: 'A worker's appetite works for him, for his hunger urges him on' (Prov. 16:26).

Fundamentally, contra Marx, people work to exist, not to realize their essence.¹¹ Yet because nature yields its resources reluctantly, survival is not accomplished easily. Consequently, the greater part of people's waking lives is devoted to work-related activities that directly or indirectly secure basic necessities.¹² New life in Christ does not reduce or abolish the need to work. Thus, people need to see themselves as finite, limited creatures who are bound by the necessity of work.¹³

Work as toil

People are also called to see themselves as sinful creatures who suffer the consequences of their separation from God. As the original blessing of work extends to all people, so the divine curse on the ground affects all humanity, for all are workers. Although all manner of work is linked with toil, it is expressed in different ways. On a physical level, the fatigue and stress of labour provide people with a sobering reminder of

their tarnished relationships with God. Moreover, because they live outside of the divine harmony, creation itself no longer provides what they need for survival. They now must strive for their sustenance. Toil is even experienced by those involved in non-manual work. For example, whereas many office workers face 'mountains' of paperwork each day, executives must frequently 'bear the burden of grave responsibility for decisions that will have a vast impact on society'.¹⁴ Some people discover that their work does not measure up to their abilities, hopes, or interests. Thus, their efforts often do 'violence' not only to their bodies and minds, but also to their 'spirits'. In such cases, work becomes a 'necessary evil', a cruel rite that elicits little that is 'noble' in them.¹⁵ Overall, the drudgery, monotony, and burden so often associated with human work possibly find their quintessential expression in the domestic worker. Housework is often fraught with the unrelenting responsibilities of raising children and keeping the family together and functioning through loving service. As pivotal as this work is for the well-being of families and societies, mothers and fathers may regard their self-sacrifice as insignificant, isolating, overwhelming, and depressing. Such frustrations are a

11 Hardy, *The Fabric of This World*, 31; and Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 149. Karl Marx said that in truly productive activity 'our productions would be so many mirrors of our nature.' Thus, our essence as human beings is realized as we contemplate ourselves in our work (*Karl Marx: The Essential Writings*, ed. Frederic L. Bender [Boulder, CO: Westview, 1972], p. 125).

12 According to a relatively recent survey, work takes up the greatest part of people's lives—even more than sleep; see Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), p. 21.

13 Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 506. Ellul states elsewhere, however, that it is an 'act of freedom' to face up to and obey the necessity of work (p. 44).

14 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, p. 39.

15 The first two quotes are from Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (New York: Avon, 1974), p. xiii; the last two quotes are from Elizabeth A. Dreyer, *Earth Crammed with Heaven: A Spirituality of Everyday Life*, (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1994), p. 86. Ellul argues that because work is of the 'order of necessity' and a sign of our creatureliness and sinfulness, we must accept it as 'normal' even though it is 'alienating, crushing, and meaningless' (*The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 506).

vivid reminder that viable work is nevertheless toil.

The strain of work may force people to focus on 'higher things' or to submit to its character-building discipline. For instance, because even the most desirable occupations contain elements of toil, all workers have the opportunity to perceive that they are imperfect creatures dependent upon divine grace and guidance. On another level, believers can identify with Christ's suffering when faithfully performing their duties under harsh or unfair circumstances (1 Peter 2:18-21). In this context, Catholic thought generally sees human work as a call to follow Christ in his example of redemptive suffering. According to John Paul II, the toil of work offers Christians the possibility of sharing in the work that Christ came to do:

By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man [woman] in a way collaborates with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity. He shows himself a true disciple of Christ by carrying the cross in his turn every day in the activity that he is called upon to perform.¹⁶

Protestantism is more hesitant to link the toil of human work with Christ's salvific suffering on the cross. It holds that this connection inevitably denigrates the cross and elevates people: 'Christ's cross ceases to be something totally unique, and becomes instead the paradigm of the more general truth that suffering is the anvil upon which human good is forged.'¹⁷

Worship

Work and prayer

Work and prayer are generally seen as different activities. Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness or mountains specifically to pray (Lk. 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 11:1; Mk. 1:35, 6:46; Mt. 14:23). His examples suggest that people need to seek out distinct times for undistracted prayer. But God wills that people also work (Gen. 1:26, 28; 2 Thess. 3:10b). The sweat, concentration, and perseverance required by work generally take up the bulk of their conscious hours. Ideally, people need to find a balance or rhythm between prayer and work so that their times of prayer are not cancelled by work and their work is not cut short by prayer. As much as they need to worship God through carrying out the divine will, they also need periodically to enjoy and praise their loving Maker in a more focused manner.¹⁸

This balance is necessary for other reasons. If human work is 'directed to worship,' then work is not the goal, but a 'means toward the end of union with God'.¹⁹ Indeed, without separate times of prayer people can become enslaved to work. People also need to seek out the proper rhythm of prayer and work if they are to avoid making the latter an idol, particularly if their work is challenging and fulfilling. Basically, human work gains its full significance from prayer, e.g., people can dedicate their work to God and ask God to bless their work. Yet in spite of the

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, p. 127.

¹⁷ Philip West, 'Cruciform Labour? The Cross in Two Recent Theologies of Work,' *Modern Churchman* 28, no. 4 (1986):14.

¹⁸ On this topic, see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 69; and Eric Steven Dale, *Bringing Heaven Down to Earth: A Practical Spirituality of Work* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), p. 65.

pivotal role that prayer plays in human work, daily tasks are not subordinate to times of prayer. Both are fundamental activities of human beings. The New Testament offers 'no hierarchical ordering of charisms'²⁰ that corresponds to individual or corporate communion with God on the one hand (e.g., praying in tongues—1 Cor. 14:2, 13-19), and to action in the world on the other (e.g., administrations, helps, and service—1 Cor. 12:28, Rom. 12:7). Because work and prayer are inspired and guided by God's Spirit, both activities are sacred.

Work as prayer

Paradoxically, it is precisely in the distinction between work and prayer that 'their oneness becomes manifest'.²¹ Work is God's instrument for purifying people from selfishness. Generally, work gets done when people get so caught up in the task or cause that they forget about themselves. When this breakthrough occurs, the unity of prayer and work is often discovered. Released from self-centredness, people are free to experience the meaning and joy of selfless surrender to God and to the task at hand. Work is now a prayer, not in the sense of a turning away from the task to communicate with God, but in a coalescing of prayerful thought and action. Over time, this harmonious state can deepen into an abiding disposition in which the customary line between action and adoration no longer exists.²²

19 The two quotes are from Kaiser, *Theology of Work*, p. 461.

20 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. 139.

21 Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, p. 70.

22 Douglas V. Steere, *Work and Contemplation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 56; Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, pp. 70-71; and Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work*, p. 63.

Personal Fulfilment

Individual development

Until fairly recently, the question of what work does to the worker was hardly ever asked except, of course, in Marxist and Christian socialist circles. This is unfortunate. By avoiding this question, people narrow the purpose of work to maintenance, as if this is possible without giving any thought to the author of work, viz., the worker. Although Jacques Ellul is sensitive to the impact of work upon workers, he argues for a utilitarian understanding of work: 'It is one of the necessities of life.... We simply have to work—that is all.'²³ In contrast, Dorothee Soelle sees work as a natural exercise and function of human beings—the only creatures made in the likeness of the divine Worker.²⁴ Because men and women are God's image bearers, Dorothy Sayers states that they should not view work as essentially a 'thing one does to live, but rather the thing one lives to do'.²⁵ John XXIII adds that it is in keeping with the plan of divine Providence for people to grow and develop through their daily work.²⁶

23 Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 496. See also endnote 13.

24 Dorothee Soelle, *To Work and to Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), pp. 80, 84.

25 Dorothy L. Sayers, 'Why Work?', chap. in *Creed or Chaos? And Other Essays in Popular Theology* (London: Methuen, 1947; reprint, 1954), p. 55. Sayers' statement would be objected to by those who put the seventh day (sabbath) as the goal of work and those who put the first day (Sunday) as its basis. For example, see respectively Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrer, Straus & Giroux, 1951), passim; and Tilden Edwards, *Sabbath Time: Understanding and Practice for Contemporary Christians* (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1982), pp. 12-16, 52-57.

26 John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, in *The Papal Encyclicals*, p. 256.

John C. Haughey provides another twist to this theme: 'As we shape and do things, they make us who we are.' In contrast to the self-actualizing aspect of work, he adds that inactivity and nonproductivity—as in unemployment and indolence—leave a person 'unmade, half-made, or misshapen'. This condition is 'deeply disfiguring of the person who was made in God's own image and likeness'.²⁷ When considered together, these ideas pose a formidable challenge to Ellul's premise.

The influence that work has on the worker is further clarified by distinguishing between the 'objective' and 'subjective' dimensions of work.²⁸ The objective dimension refers to the impact that human work has on anything from the production of material goods to the transformation of society. The subjective dimension refers to people's personal involvement in their daily tasks. Here, work can be a means of self-expression, self-realization, and personal development. Ellul counters this more optimistic Catholic view by asserting that this is frequently not the case, e.g., the plight of women in the workplace, the increasingly restricted opportunities for vocational choice, the social and racial barriers which hold back individual advancement, and the meaninglessness of atomized work that is far removed from the finished product. Indeed, because of such obstacles and limita-

tions, he rejects such meanings as 'self-realization' and 'self-enhancement'.²⁹ Though his charge is often true, the subjective dimension still takes precedence over the objective:

However true it may be that man is destined for work and called to it, in the first place work is 'for man' and not man 'for work'. Through this conclusion one rightly comes to recognize the pre-eminence of the subjective meaning of work over the objective one.³⁰

Whereas the products of work, including the organization of society, are vital contributions to humanity, the individual development and interaction of working people—no matter how often or seldom they occur—are phenomena of a more important nature.

Soelle builds on this basic premise. When people give priority to the subjective dimension of work over the objective, they expose capitalism and socialism as 'systems that deny the dignity of the worker in her work'. She adds that the subjectivity of work provides the main reason for establishing the priority of labour over capital. Moreover, the priority of workers over their work requires that working conditions facilitate rather than impede their needs for self-expression, responsibility, and personal dignity.³¹

There are different aspects of individual development that can arise from work. First, human nature is merely a rough sketch, a beginning

²⁷ The last three quotes are from John C. Haughey, *Converting Nine to Five: A Spirituality of Daily Work*, (New York: Crossroads, 1989), p. 33.

²⁸ For an extended treatment on this topic, see John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, pp. 16-27.

²⁹ Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 468; see also pp. 412, 458, and passim. For real-life examples of the oppression and opposition associated with human work, see Terkel, *Working*; and James E. Dittes, *Men at Work: Life Beyond the Office* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

³⁰ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, p. 27.

³¹ For the quote and thoughts, see Soelle, *To Work and to Love*, pp. 88 & 89.

of the whole person that needs to find its full expression through activity. In this sense, work enables people to use and perfect their areas of giftedness. Work can even bring out latent abilities that have gone unrealized.³² Second, although people are born with different abilities, additional talents are usually developed during the course of their lives through practice and discipline, interaction with others, and environmental influences. These capabilities are also gifts from God's Spirit. People, however, must not passively receive the Spirit's provisions. Whether they acquire new skills or develop existing abilities through their work, they need to remain receptive to the Spirit of God.³³ Third, work is a school for life in which people can learn to act on the basis of their 'better moral impulses and values'³⁴ and grow in the virtues of patience, tenacity, commitment, sacrificial love, industriousness, and obedience.

Finally, all free, constructive work provides people with an opportunity to release the power of their imaginations. For instance, they can 'come up with an invention, a new solution to a problem, or a new way of working'.³⁵ These creative expressions testify not only to human ingenuity, but also to the work of the Spirit. Yet people engaged in creative work do more than use their ideas to fashion something. Their creative capacities help them to 'come out of themselves', and to

'realize their being' more fully.³⁶ W. R. Forrester states that people engage in creative work by incarnating their spirits into their work or the product of their work. He reasons that this is why artists and craftspeople have always found inspiration in the incarnation of Christ; both are, in a sense, incarnations of spirit into matter.³⁷ Fortunately, this heightened awareness may happen to all workers, and not just those involved in the 'more creative' professions.

Dignity

Though not all work appears to have dignity, there is an inherent dignity associated with all workers. Human dignity, however, is not derived from work. It is based rather on the scriptural understanding that God created human beings to reflect the divine image and that Christ suffered, died, and rose for them. Essentially, people are 'receivers' before they are grateful and industrious 'doers'.³⁸ Yet as God's image bearers, people are innately capable of expressing this dignity in constructive and creative ways, which may reflect itself in service as much as creativity, in conserving as much as innovating, in ordering life as much as enhancing it. Moreover, because free, constructive work expresses the dignity of the human person, it follows that the dignity of work does not consist in what is

36 Moltmann, 'The Right to Meaningful Work,' p. 50.

37 W. R. Forrester, *Christian Vocation: Studies in Faith and Work* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 135.

38 Miroslav Volf, 'On Human Work: An Evaluation of the Key Ideas of the Encyclical *'Laborem Exercens'*,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 (1984): 73. See also V. George Shillington, 'A New Testament Perspective on Work,' *The Conrad Grebel Review* 10 (Spring 1992): 144.

32 E. F. Schumacher, *Good Work* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 3.

33 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. 130.

34 Haughey, *Converting Nine to Five*, p. 14.

35 Soelle, *To Work and to Love*, p. 85.

done, but in *how* it is done,³⁹ viz., in loving, wholehearted service to God that is inspired and guided by the Spirit. This pneumatological understanding of work does not allow for a 'hierarchical valuation' of the various tasks of a Christian. All forms of work, from pastoring a church to managing a home, possess 'fundamentally the same dignity'⁴⁰ if they are directed by the Spirit.

The biblical witness supports this last idea, although the dignity of common labour was established not so much by specific proof texts as by the general picture of life that emerged. There was a veritable gallery of people engaged in ordinary labour, e.g., the craftsman or artisan (Ex. 31:1-5; Rev. 18:22), potter (Jer. 18:3-4; Rom. 9:21), farmer (Gen. 9:20; Mt. 12:1-2), scholar or scribe (Eccl. 12:9-12; Mt. 13:52), sailor (Ps. 107:23; Acts 27:27-30), construction worker (2 Kings 12:12-13; Heb. 3:3), musician (Gen. 4:21; Rev. 18:22), shepherd (Gen. 47:3; Jn. 10:1-16), fisherman (Ezek. 47:10; Mt. 13:47-50), steward (Gen. 44:1; Lk. 16:1-8), servant (Dt. 5:14; Mt. 24:45), and worker at home (Prov. 31:10-28; 1 Tim. 5:14). Moreover, Saul was depicted as ploughing with his oxen (1 Sam. 11:5) and David was portrayed as a shepherd before he was anointed king (1 Sam. 16:11-13). No editorial effort was made to protect their royal dignity. It would seem from these passages that God sees no hierarchy of occupations. Tending sheep or a nation has the same dignity.

Achievement

Human workers should make and do things after the example of their Creator. As God's creative work was 'very good' (Gen. 1:31), so people should also strive to do high-quality work. At times, work done well can lead to opposition and a sense of oppression and frustration because of others' negative responses to it. For example, Paul's diligent missionary work was carried out amidst great opposition, as he vividly described in his list of trials (2 Cor. 11:23-29; cf. 1 Thess. 2:2). He mentioned to the Philippians that the jealous opposition of certain brethren and his imprisonment actually advanced the gospel (Phil. 1:14-18). Similarly, Jeremiah's faithful prophesying resulted in deep lamentation over his life (Jer. 20:14-18).

Nevertheless, work done well can be 'transforming', for there is a close correspondence between achievement and satisfaction.⁴¹ For instance, some workers find pleasure in solving problems and difficulties. Others experience the joy of knowing that the product they make, or the service they provide, meet a real need in society. Still others, after working all day at a job in which they are poorly paid, put loving labour into a hobby that cannot bring them any financial remuneration. These examples suggest that people work not only out of necessity, but also for the satisfaction they derive from their efforts, such as the ability to develop personal skills, to pursue special interests, to contemplate past accomplishments, and

40 The last two quotes are from Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. 124 and 125 respectively.

41 Dale, *Bringing Heaven Down to Earth* 15. For more on work and personal satisfaction, see Sayers, 'Why Work?', p. 55; and Piper, 'The Meaning of Work,' p. 183.

39 William J. Dumbrell, 'Creation, Covenant, and Work,' *Evangelical Review of Theology* 13 (April 1989):151.

to anticipate new challenges.⁴²

Although people have the god-like ability to examine their work, some personal reflections can go awry. Admiration of their accomplishments and creative faculties may lead to pride. Eventually, they may support a non-scriptural humanism that exalts 'the creature rather than the Creator' (Rom. 1:15). To counter this temptation, Scripture repeatedly warns people against worshipping the works of their hands. On one level, the intentional worship of crafted idols was vigorously condemned. For example, God quickly judged Israel for worshipping the golden calf (Ex. 32:4-14, 35; see also Ps. 115:4; Is. 40:18-20, 44:9-10). On another level, God did not tolerate indefinitely the pride people took in the magnitude of their tasks or in the magnificence of their craftsmanship. Perhaps the classic scriptural example of human work performed in the service of self is the construction of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). Settlers on the plain of Shinar said: 'Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower... and let us make for ourselves a name' (v. 4). So massive were their achievements that God personally intervened to stop them from reaching their goals. Similarly, King Nebuchadnezzar was forced by God to live like an animal for several years on account of the pride he displayed at the completion of his tremendous building projects in Babylon (Dan. 4:28-33).

The examples from Babel and Babylon illustrate how easily people can make work the idol by which they determine their worth and establish their identities.⁴³ Yet because people are created for God and not for their work, there are limits to the satisfaction they can gain through work. Ultimately, they must find in their Creator what they cannot find in work. The restlessness that arises from human work, however, can function as an 'evangelist' that leads them to God.

Service

Motivation

God does not selfishly require from people special sacrifices offered to him/her alone. When people respond to divine love and grace, God redirects their attention to 'the world and its need.' Accordingly, there are no religious restrictions because serving God takes place in 'life itself'.⁴⁴ Christians are to see themselves as at God's disposal, carrying out the divine will in all that they do: Whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:11). Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). This attitude transforms constructive

42 Ellul counters, 'When human work produces joy or what seems to be outside the everyday, we have to realize that this is an exceptional event, a grace, a gift of God' (*The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 506). Yet by placing the greater part of our waking hours, i.e., work, at the mercy of God's 'exceptional' intervention, the inherently spiritual character of work is nullified.

43 The New Testament repeatedly condemns 'justification by works' and advocates 'justification by faith' (e.g., Mt. 20:1-16, Rom. 3:28, Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 3:5). The modern-day equivalent of the former is a 'justification by work' in which people validate their lives through their work or paid employment. On this topic, see Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work*, pp. 59-62.

44 The last two quotes are from Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), p. 189.

work into something holy and good (Rom. 12:1-2, 2 Tim. 2:21, 1 Peter 1:15-16; cf. Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8; 2 Peter 3:11).

The motivation for service is based on several factors. First, the appropriate response to creatures made in the image of God is 'a deep reverence and an attitude of service'.⁴⁵ Second, people can picture someone in need as Christ himself and thereby serve Christ by providing, among other things, food, clothing, and shelter as needed. Scripture indicates that no conflict exists between the love of God and the love of neighbour (1 Jn. 3:16-18; 4:12, 20-28). Because God identifies with fallen humanity, to serve the needy is to serve God. Jesus emphasized this point when informing his disciples as to what he would say on the last day to those who had faithfully served the sick, the stranger, and the hungry: 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me' (Mt. 25:40). This argument is widely represented in contemporary Catholic theology on work, e.g., 'Jesus is hidden in those most in need; to reject them is to reject God made manifest in history.'⁴⁶ Third, people can imitate Christ in his service to others. Jesus characterized his ministry when he said that he had not come 'to be served, but to serve' (Mt. 20:28). His earthly ministry included one example after another of loving service to those in need. Immediately prior to his death, he made his intentions explicit for the

twelve disciples by washing their feet and directing them to follow in his steps: If I then, the Lord and Teacher, wash your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you (Jn. 13:14-15).

In like manner, all Christians should respond to Christ's exhortation by following him in the service of others. Christ's teaching also suggests that people are not to avoid even the humblest work since it possesses an inherent dignity when performed in imitation of him.⁴⁷ Fourth, the Christian principle of stewardship is built on the premise that everything people have—including their interests and abilities—belongs to God. As God's ambassadors, they are entrusted with these possessions in order to use them for their neighbour's good. Jesus dealt with this principle in the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30; cf. Lk. 19:12-27). His followers were accountable to God for everything God had given them. They were to use their talents to serve others and to develop God's resources. In doing so, they served God and the divine purposes.⁴⁸ Calvin added that stewardship was properly expressed through love to the community:

47 Arthur T. Geoghegan, *The Attitude Towards Labor in Early Christianity and Ancient Culture* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. Press, 1945), 99. See also William A. Beardslee, *Human Achievement and Divine Vocation in the Message of Paul*, Studies in Biblical Theology: no. 31 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1961), p. 129.

48 William E. Diehl, *The Monday Connection: A Spirituality of Competence, Affirmation, and Support in the Workplace* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 10-13; Hardy, *The Fabric of This World*, p. 66; Carl H. Henry, 'The Christian View of Work,' in *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*, ed. Carl H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), p. 31; and Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. 88-89, 114.

45 Haughey, *Converting Nine to Five*, p. 24. For more here, see Calvin, *Institutes*, III, vii, 6.

46 National Council of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All* (United States Catholic Conference, 1986), sec. 44. For more on this view, see Hardy, *The Fabric of This World*, pp. 74-75.

No member has its ['divine deposits'] function for itself, or applies it for its own private use, but transfers it to its fellow-members; nor does it derive any other advantage from it than that which it receives in common with the whole body.... In regard to everything which God has bestowed upon us, and by which we can aid our neighbour, we are his stewards, and are bound to give account of our stewardship; moreover, that the only right mode of administration is that which is regulated by love.⁴⁹

Finally, Scripture suggests that Christian workers are to do their tasks not so much for those in authority over them but for Christ himself (Eph. 6:5-7; Col. 3:22-24). The motive behind this Christian ethic of work comes from the obedience they owe to their heavenly Master. By picturing their earthly masters as types of Christ, workers can conscientiously and honestly perform their duties. Human work in this sense is raised to a sacred level for the goal is not reward or profit but the commending of the Christian faith and the honouring of God (Titus 2:10, 1 Tim. 6:1).⁵⁰

Charity

It has been argued that, according to Scripture, the main purposes of work were the meeting of personal needs and the needs of strangers, the sick, and the underprivileged.⁵¹ For example, Jesus exhorted his followers to give to the needy without

exception (Mt. 5:42, Lk. 6:38). He wanted them to 'honour and love... the image of God, which exists in all',⁵² and not to consider what people, in themselves, deserved. This principle was to include their enemies: 'But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return' (Lk. 6:35; cf. Lk. 6:27-34, Mt. 5:44-47). Elsewhere, he said that he would ultimately judge people's lives and work in terms of the charity they provided the less fortunate (Mt. 25:31-40).

The duty of almsgiving is not fulfilled by the mere providing of goods and services. Christ's disciples need to match their external acts with proper attitudes. In light of all God has done for them, they are not to give 'grudgingly or under compulsion' (2 Cor. 9:7b), but with cheerfulness and gratitude. Furthermore, as God has given 'generously and without reproach' to all people (James 1:5; cf. 1 Tim. 6:17b), so they are to give liberally to the poor (Dt. 15:8, 10; Prov. 22:9; 2 Cor. 9:9-11, 13; 1 Tim. 6:18). When Jesus told his disciples, 'freely you received, freely give' (Mt. 10:8), he was referring to continual action based on an ongoing sense of gratitude. Similarly, when the writer of 1 Timothy exhorted his readers 'to be generous and ready to share' (6:18b), he was implying that they maintain an attentiveness to other's needs. These passages indicate that a one-time act of charity is an inadequate response of love in light of God's ongoing charity to fallen humans. Finally, Christians are to put themselves in the place of those whom they see in need of their assistance (e.g., Heb. 13:3). By experi-

49 Calvin, *Institutes*, III, vii, 5.

50 Johannes B. Bauer, ed., *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1970), s.v. 'Work,' by Johannes B. Bauer; and Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work*, pp. 43-44.

51 Volf, 'On Human Work,' p. 77. (See Gen. 1:29, 2:15; Acts 20:34-35; Eph. 4:28.) Although almsgiving was generally made possible by work, it could include selling 'property and possessions' and sharing the proceeds among the needy (e.g., Acts 2:45; cf. II Cor. 8:14).

52 Calvin, *Institutes*, III, vii, 6.

encing empathy for the 'downtrodden' (Lk. 4:18), they protect themselves from arrogance as well as the needy from subjection.⁵³

Community

Closely related to, but not synonymous with, almsgiving is service to the community. Whereas almsgiving consists of gifts to the needy, service to the community centres more on working with others and working for the common good—the latter not necessarily provided free of charge. Basically, the necessity to work implies the necessity to cooperate with others.⁵⁴ John Paul II takes this correspondence one step further: It is characteristic of work that it first and foremost unites people. In this consists its social power: the power to build a community.⁵⁵

Human work can bring people together because it liberates them from their inborn egocentricity which, in turn, frees them to cooperate with and serve others.⁵⁶ When taken together, these thoughts counterbalance Ellul's assertion that work is inherently 'alienating'.⁵⁷

Relationships in the workplace can occur between peers, employers and employees, parents and children, and instructors and students. The character of these relationships generally influences the quality of work that is done. In business, 'spontaneous horizontal relationships' (e.g., teamwork), rather than 'hierarchical chains of command', can increase morale, efficiency, productivity, and

the free flow of ideas.⁵⁸ The harmonious running of a home is determined to a great extent by the cooperative efforts of each family member rather than by the 'dictatorial' rulings of one adult. Likewise, the learning process is often enhanced by the exchange of ideas between the teacher and students versus the one-way lecture.⁵⁹

The fact that most people need to work, and the reason why they need to work, promote the common good of society. In this sense, 'mere utility is elevated to the place of service to humanity',⁶⁰ which includes 'building the future' for following generations.⁶¹ The dignity of work, consequently, does not depend on the kind of work performed, but on the reason *why* it is performed. The humblest of work is of equal value to highly specialized work if it is done in obedience to Jesus' commission to serve one another (Jn. 13:14-15). Indeed, the notion of work as service for the common good abolishes the distinction between 'spiritual' and 'secular' work. Spiritual work is no longer seen as religious endeavours, but as any activity that 'serves the Divine will and human community'.⁶²

On another level, although people have the same basic needs, they do

58 Moltmann, 'The Right to Meaningful Work,' p. 55.

59 For more on cooperation in the home and classroom, see Earnest Boyer Jr., *Finding God at Home: Family Life as Spiritual Discipline* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1984), pp. 128-176; and Parker J. Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).

60 Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 388.

61 The last two quotes are from John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 44 and 73 respectively.

62 Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, 388. For more on this topic, see John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistle of Ephesians* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1973), p. 457.

53 Calvin, *Institutes*, III, vii, 7.

54 Otto A. Piper, 'The Meaning of Work,' *Theology Today* 14 (July 1957):184-185.

55 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, p. 96.

56 Soelle, *To Work and to Love*, p. 93; and Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 387.

57 Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 496.

not have the same talents and abilities. The Spirit has equipped people differently in order that they might fully serve humanity together. This idea abolishes the basis for grouping people into classes according to their occupations.⁶³ In addition, Scripture indicates that people's charisms obligate them to serve others in specific ways (Rom. 12: 6-8; 1 Peter 4:10). It follows that the use of their charisms connects them with various communities, e.g., the home, neighborhood, workplace, parachurch organization, and church. More fundamentally, accepting the dignity of all workers and the work they perform is indispensable to the building of community.⁶⁴

Workers contribute to the common good of society in different ways. They can provide people with goods and services that are useful or necessary. On a broader scale, they can work for social reform. Injustices in society are righted only when fair and equal redress or due are pursued on behalf of all people. Paul VI indicated that Christian workers should 'take the initiative freely and infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live'.⁶⁵ Finally, Dorothy Sayers argued that the best way for workers to further the common good is by serving their work rather than their community:

The worker's first duty is to *serve the work* [italics are hers]... There is, in fact, a paradox about working to serve the community, and it is this: that to aim directly at serving the community is to falsify the work; the only way to serve the

community is to forget the community and serve the work.⁶⁶

She defended her premise on several grounds. First, when people believe it is their duty to serve the community, then human beings are inevitably served before God. As a result, God's image bearers are worshipped and made the standard by which to measure all else. Second, in order to do good work, people must focus on the task at hand rather than the people they serve. Such competence is a cornerstone of ministry. John Paul II states that competency at work is not only a major factor in meeting the needs of society, but also the means whereby the 'spirit of Christ [can] more effectively achieve its purpose in justice, charity, and peace'.⁶⁷ Third, people who serve their communities may expect something in return. Those who serve their work, however, are primarily interested in the satisfaction of doing a task well. Fourth, workers who focus on serving their communities may aim at pleasing people's changing desires and expectations instead of simply doing high-quality work. This emphasis is self-defeating. Only work done well—'as its own integrity demands that it should be done'—will endure, for it alone is 'true to itself'.⁶⁸

63 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, p. 27.

64 Hardy, *The Fabric of This World*, p. 60; and Dale *Bringing Heaven Down to Earth*, p. 79.

65 Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, in *The Papal Encyclicals*, p. 81.

66 Sayers, 'Why Work?', pp. 61-62.

67 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, p. 117.

68 These two quotes, and Sayers' four points, are found in Sayers, 'Why Work?', p. 61-63.

Conclusion

We have seen that the divine-human link in work is evident on several theological fronts.

a) Choosing to obey God in our common, ordinary activities is a practical spiritual discipline. People who work under the guidance and direction of God receive divine favour. For instance, the anxiety that naturally arises from striving to meet daily needs should not undermine the pursuit of God's kingdom. God blesses the work of those who exhibit trust despite the unrelenting demands of personal survival. Conversely, those who refuse to submit their efforts to God come under divine disfavour.

b) Instead of retreating from the needs of the world, we are to extend willingly God's providential care to others, as well as to cultivate and preserve the earth's natural resources. Along this line, each of us has special abilities and interests that can help meet the wide spectrum of human needs. At times, however, God provides us sustenance apart from work—e.g., gifts and charity—to remind us that our welfare is ultimately grounded in divine goodness rather than our industriousness.

c) There are several ways in which we may view our daily work as a service to God and others. We may learn to see our service to the underprivileged, or those over us, as service to Christ himself. Our toil and sacrificial service for others can help us identify with Jesus, the suffering Servant. We may exercise stewardship of our abilities by wholeheartedly serving God's creation. We are commanded to work hard to support ourselves and the less fortunate, e.g., we should always offer the fruit of our work generously, willingly, and

empathetically to whomever is in need. Finally, we may effectively serve people in the relationships we develop in the workplace and in the work we do for the common good of society. Personal integrity, humility, respect, and competence facilitate these two areas of community service.

d) Although work and prayer are separate activities, they are intimately linked if we first dedicate our efforts to God and ask God to bless them, and then 'lose ourselves' (i.e., our self-centredness) in the task at hand. In this sense, worship is realized in an immersing in rather than a withdrawing from our ordinary work-related activities.

e) The divine-human link is seen in the personal fulfilment we gain from work. On one level, we are by nature workers because we were made in the likeness of the divine Worker. Moreover, as God drew satisfaction from reflecting upon the act of creation, so we too can reflect upon and derive satisfaction from our efforts. We can also mirror in a small way the creative aspect of God when using the power of our imaginations in our work. Our creative efforts point to more than our ingenuity; they also testify of the work of God's Spirit within us. On another level, just as God is greater than what she/he creates, so we are more valuable than what we do. Accordingly, our efforts to pursue and defend the preeminence of workers over their work is a small reminder that the divine Worker is preeminent over all creation. On yet another level, although we are born with God-given abilities, we must remain receptive to the ongoing work of the Spirit in and with us in developing our personal talents. The obedient and gracious exercising of these capabilities—

both innate and acquired—can promote enhanced service.

Based on these five points, it follows that there is an inherent dignity in all workers and all legitimate forms of work. Because we are God's image bearers, the value of work does not lie primarily in what we are doing, but in displaying the likeness of the divine Worker in creative and constructive ways. Correspondingly,

Scripture offers no hierarchy of occupations. All work done as unto God, carried out in obedience to Christ's command to serve others, and accomplished under the Spirit's prompting is an honourable and sacred activity. These truths can shed a hopeful light into the debilitating darkness of meaningless, laborious, and oppressive work situations.

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Jesus and the Victory of Culture

Olu E. Alana

Keywords: Judaeen culture, Graeco-Roman culture, African culture, baptism, parables, miracles, healing, Mystery Religions, Pharisees, inculturation, traditional healing

Christians generally regard Jesus, the hero and mentor of their faith, as a universal figure with a universal mission. That is a sound Christian theological thought. But historically, everybody knows Jesus to be a well-bred Judaeen. He was not only a Judaeen by descent, he actually lived as a Judaeen and ministered exclusively among the Judaeans, save in a few instances when he had to attend to the spiritual needs of outsiders (Luke 17:17f., Matt. 8:5-13; Mark 7:24-30; John 4:1ff.).

Jesus remains the perfect teacher

and the paradigm whose example all Christians strive to emulate in all that they do. Our modern times have witnessed debates by eminent Christian scholars and great church men as to how Christians should relate to culture.¹ In a situation such as this, it is appropriate to look back at how Jesus related to his own cultural environments. That is precisely what we want to do in this essay. Did he accommodate his ancestral cultural milieu? What was his attitude to other cultures such as the imperial Graeco-Roman society? The examination of the historical and political situations in the Roman-Palestine of Jesus' days is necessary for a clear picture of our presentation. Answering such questions as these will help us make an application to the contemporary African church.

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¹ See Jeremy Punt, 'Reading the Bible in Africa: Accounting for some trends-Part 1', *Scriptura* 68:1 (1999), pp. 2-7.

The Historical Survey

Jesus lived and worked in a world which was sandwiched between the Judaeans and the Graeco-Roman cultures of antiquity.² The Judaeans inhabited the Roman-Palestine, never as overlords but always as subjects. It will be recalled that the First Testament ends the history of the Judaeans with their subordination to the Persians as the overlords. The rule of the Persians was itself finally submerged by the vigorous military campaigns of Alexander the Great, a Macedonian prince who was poised for a vast Greek empire. Hardly had he started the consolidation of the gains of his efforts than he died of fever.³ His conquests, however, saw the spread of Greek culture throughout the eastern Mediterranean world. Of course, Greek culture was already penetrating the eastern Mediterranean world before Alexander's reign; it is noteworthy that his conquests, in no small way, accelerated its spread.⁴

Alexander's generals balkanised his empire into three kingdoms after his death and this marked the beginning of the Hellenistic age which witnessed a series of alliances, intrigues, perfidy and wars. On the whole, Greek culture, otherwise known as Hellenism, was promoted in all the kingdoms. By 30 BCE, the Hellenistic kingdoms had all collapsed. Octavian (later called Augustus), at whose instance the last of the Hellenistic kingdoms fell and

who was then the undisputed Roman ruler, easily established his control over Palestine.⁵ It was under this man as the Roman Emperor that Jesus was born (Luke 2:1). The Roman suzerainty over the then Palestine and indeed over the Judaeans remained intact throughout the Second Testament period.

The Romans are generally reputed for their administrative ingenuity. They were very tolerant of other cultures as long as the latter did not promote rebellion. They did nothing to upset the prevailing Greek culture. The Greek language remained the official language of the Roman Empire, though the use of Latin was equally encouraged. Also, while the spirit of Hellenism was not discouraged, the Romans steadily diffused their own cultural legacies—civil administration and military stratagem.

We should not forget the fact that the Judaeans were traditionally religiously exclusive. Generally, they practised their religious exclusiveness as much as they were able. The inherent hatred for foreign rulers among them remained the norm. They successfully executed a protracted bloody resistance against the Seleucids' desecration of their religion in 167 BCE,⁶ and risked another resistance against the Roman authorities in 66 CE. The latter culminated in the Roman invasion that led to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.⁷ The well-known Judaeans exclusiveness should not be taken to mean that the Judaeans were not influenced by the events going on in the

² J. I. De Villiers, 'The Political Situation in the Graeco-Roman world in the period 332 BC to AD 138', in A. B. du Toit (ed.), *The New Testament Milieu*. Tran. D. Roy Briggs et al. (Johannesburg: Orion, 1998), p. 96.

³ De Villiers, 'Political Situation', p. 101.

⁴ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 8.

⁵ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, p. 19.

⁶ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, pp. 323-327.

⁷ John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), p. 16.

wider Graeco-Roman society. It was just not possible for them to completely alienate their spiritual life from that of their neighbours without exchange of ideas in a situation where they shared common political, economic and socio-cultural interests.⁸ The point being made is that, despite the fact that the Judaeans lived as subjects almost all the time, they tried to isolate and alienate themselves religiously from the rest of the then known world. At least, that was the attitude of the Roman-Palestinian Judaeans. The Hellenistic Judaeans were more liberal religiously, possibly as a result of their exposure as immigrants. Jesus was, however, not a Hellenistic Judaeans but a Roman-Palestinian Judaeans. An examination of his attitude to his Judaeans milieu is pertinent to bring within focus at this juncture.

Jesus' Attitude to his Judaeans Background

As a Roman-Palestinian Judaeans, Jesus remained faithful to his background. He clearly knew that he was greater than John the Baptist, yet he consented to be baptized by him (Matt. 3:14-15).⁹ This he did for his regard for the Jewish culture. F. V. Filson, is very correct when he says that,

[h]is supreme rank does not release Jesus from the obligation 'to fulfil all

righteousness'; he is one with his people and must join with them in the acts which express response to God's spokesman and dedication to God's will. His coming to baptism expresses his sense that John is right, Israel must repent and be baptized and by obedience prepare for the coming kingdom; all of Israel, including the Strong One, must share in this preparation.¹⁰

He made use of the parable, an existing teaching method among his people. It was an illustration, a comparison or a story from the realm of nature or even human life; it often had allegorical colours, just like most Judaeans stories.¹¹ The synoptic gospels have a large number of parables credited to Jesus. It is also almost unbelievable that the parables are absent from the gospel of John and other Second Testament books. What is clear is that the parable was not a new creation of Jesus. It was a common teaching method to illustrate the truth. Jesus only found it in use and seeing it as a useful and effective teaching method, he used it with a mastery never before known in Roman-Palestine.

Jesus also made use of miracles, which were widely practised in both the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds of his day.¹² I prefer to refer to his exorcisms, raisings of the dead and cures as healings inasmuch as each of such phenomena is concerned with restoration of health, the apparent differences between them notwithstanding. The interesting thing here is that Jesus made use of existing common healing techniques. For example, he healed with a word or command (Matt. 8:3, 9:6; 12:3; Mark 5:41; Luke 7:34), by

⁸ See O. E. Alana, 'The Impact of the Healing miracles of Jesus on the Healing methods of Aladura churches in Yorubaland' (PhD., University of Ilorin, 1992), p. 149.

⁹ Matthew alone of all the evangelists has this detail. John the Baptist felt that the Greater One should not be baptized by the lesser one. The Greek imperfect, *diekoluen*, indicates an action attempted but then given up. All the gospels portray John's feeling of inferiority, possibly for apologetic reasons.

¹⁰ F. V. Filson, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: A. & C. Black, 1975), p. 68.

¹¹ Filson, *St. Matthew*, p. 159.

¹² Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, p. 43.

contact and the laying on of hands (Matt. 9:29; Mark 7:33; Luke 7:14), by rebuke (Mark 1:10f., Luke 9:37f.) and by prayer (Mark 9:37f.), among others.¹³

Although Jesus came to inaugurate a universal religion, he chose to preach the gospel, first among 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 15:24, 26; Mark 7:27); others, apparently non-Judaeans, he regarded as 'dogs'! His attitude at this point in time, viewed in isolation, smacks of racism. But when we consider it along with his ministry in totality, it will not be correct to describe it as such. It will be more appropriate to view his action here as an unwillingness to accept non-Judaeans in the new commonwealth, which he was inaugurating. He did this because he probably thought that it was a deviation from the original plan of reaching his fellow Judaeans first. His hesitation could, however, be accommodated if he was carrying out his ministry within the structure of a timetable, which placed the conversion of the Judaeans first, then that of the non-Judaeans; a plan that would agree with the common adage, 'charity begins at home'.

Jesus saw many flaws in the religion of his earthly forebears, which was in the form of the scribal Pharisaism of his day. For instance, the law, which demanded the full obedience of the people, was never obeyed. In that way, it bred hypocrisy and dishonesty. Although he was very critical of those flaws, he never repudiated his ancestral religion altogether. He came not to

abolish the law but to fulfil it, he would assure his people (Matt. 5:17-18). Although Jesus never pronounced the establishment of a new religion throughout his ministry, Christianity indeed emerged as a new religion with the events of the day of Pentecost under his able apostles. It must, however, be noted that the hostilities between Jesus and the social political elite of his day¹⁴ clearly pointed to the fact that the Jesus' movement could not for long remain within the control of scribal Pharisaism. But while Jesus was alive, he carried on his ministry within that context.

On the whole, he was well disposed to some of the religious practices of his day. He practised almsgiving (Matt. 6:2), which was honoured in Jewish life. He approved of fasting (Matt. 6:16), which was observed twice a week by all earnest Judaeans. Like all devout Judaeans, Jesus regularly went to the synagogues for prayers (Matt. 12:9; Mark 3:1) and teaching (John 7:14; Mark 11:15-17) and freely paid his temple tax (Matt. 17:27). Although he disregarded ceremonial laws to express and give help such as healing on the Sabbath day, it was his wish that the Judaeans lived within the framework of the Mosaic Law.¹⁵ That was why he ordered the leper to go and show himself to the priest in accordance with the Mosaic Law (Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:4). And like other Jewish rabbis, Jesus had a group of disciples, the Twelve, to under-study him so they could propagate

¹³ For details of Jesus' healing techniques, see O. E. Alana, 'A Study of the Healing Techniques of Jesus', *Journal of Religious Studies* 27:1, 2 (1996), pp. 88-96.

¹⁴ See Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social values of labels in Matthew* (Sonoma, California: Polebridge, 1988), pp. 3-32.

¹⁵ Filson, *St. Matthew*, p. 110.

his beliefs after him.¹⁶

Jesus and the Graeco-Roman Milieu

As Judaeen as he was, Jesus clearly recognized the force of other cultures, particularly the Graeco-Roman. He respected and was obedient to the Roman authorities. He paid tax to them: that was why he would not advise his fellow Jews otherwise (Matt. 22:15-21; Mark 12:13-19; Luke 20:20-26). Indeed, some of the religious rites observed today by the church, which were personally inaugurated by Jesus himself, can be traced in origin to some of the practices of the Graeco-Roman Mystery Religions. The resurrection motif is, strictly speaking, not explicit in the Second Testament. It is, however, paralleled in the Mystery Religions, though not without basic fundamental differences arising from their distinct religious backgrounds.¹⁷ The rites of baptism and the Eucharist, which were unknown in the religion of the Second Testament, were prominent practices of the Mystery Religions of the Graeco-Roman world.¹⁸ From their traditional Roman backgrounds, such rites were appropriated into the religious routine of some of the religious sects within the scribal Pharisaism of Jesus' day. The Qumran sect members, for instance, practised baptism by immersion and served religious meals,¹⁹ that could be likened to the rite of Eucharist in

Christianity. John the Baptist also practised baptism by immersion. Jesus evidently encountered all these practices, yet took them over, not as they were, but within a new context.

Generally, Jesus had a high estimation of his cultural backgrounds. He was a fine Judaeen but very dynamic and pragmatic; always ready to make use of the common but valuable religious and social currents within his environment. He was no rebel against his Judaeen cultural heritage²⁰ but he was nevertheless a cultural reformer. He did not jettison his cultural heritage; rather, he reformed those aspects of the culture that he believed could be of benefit to his ministry. Then he went ahead to utilize them as such. So, in the light of what has been discussed about Jesus' attitude to his cultural backgrounds, what should be the attitude of the church toward the inculturation of Christianity in Africa, as elsewhere?

Challenge for the Church in Africa

The church should not shy away and look the other way when her hero, perfect example and role-model is there to look up to in knowing what to do on the issue of Christian attitude to culture. From what is known of Jesus' attitude to his cultural milieu, it is clear that every local church is free to interact reasonably with her host culture. The church in Europe should be free to take as much as could be helpful for the gospel of Christ from her host culture just as the church in Asia should explore the rich cultural heritage of her host societies for the benefit of

¹⁶ Richard A. Burridge, *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 45.

¹⁷ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, p. 238.

¹⁸ See James Price, *Interpreting the New Testament*. 2nd Ed. (New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1971), pp. 145, 343.

¹⁹ Price, *Interpreting*, p. 343.

²⁰ Filson, *St. Matthew*, p. 83.

the gospel. Indeed, the church in Europe has long realized this and has utilized it to advantage. From the distant past, the Europeans started infusing much of their culture into the church. Today, it is difficult to draw a line between an aspect of the European culture that was brought into Christian practice at a point in time and Bible-based Christian culture (which again is heavily laden with Judaeo and other Mediterranean cultures). For example, most of the marriage practices in the church today that are gleefully referred to as 'Christian marriage practices' have their antecedents in the Roman and European cultures and not necessarily in the Bible.²¹

It appears that the real problem is not whether the European cultures are compatible with Christianity. It has long been decided by the Europeans themselves that they are, since they are 'civilized.' It is the cultures of the Two-Thirds World countries like African countries, which the Europeans considered, and probably still consider, 'uncivilized' and thus incompatible with Christianity. There is no doubt that their judgement is unfair and very misleading. It arose out of the mistaken practice of judging the customs of the Two-Thirds World countries on the basis of their compatibility with modern western ideals. Such a practice often 'leads not to understanding but to misunderstanding'.²²

With regard to Africa, Christians there have been active in taking as much as possible of their rich cultural heritage into their practice of

Christianity. It is interesting to note that the initiative to do this came from the ordinary church men and women who were in most cases non-literate.²³ But they were knowledgeable in the word of God as proclaimed by the Bible. Perhaps the European type of Christianity that was introduced to Africa was too 'foreign' to impress them or to actually touch their lives just as was the case of North Africans in the first five centuries CE.²⁴ It could also be a divine act. Some African church men and women rose up to the challenge of establishing local churches among their peoples so that they could practise Christianity as Africans, that is, without having to jettison their cultural identity. This effort was a bold attempt to put the stamp of African cultural heritage on the Christianity practised by Africans so that they can be proud of being African Christians. This was what led to the rise of African Independent Churches, some of which date back to the end of the nineteenth century.

Today, most of the Christian denominations in Africa are sympathetic towards the African cultural heritage. African theologians are also rising to the occasion, not only in approving of the steps taken by

²³ Most of such church leaders never had the opportunity of formal education but managed only to learn to read the Bible. Others merely learned the Bible by heart without being able to read it at all.

²⁴ It should be remembered that Christianity failed in North Africa mainly because it was throughout a Latin affair. No efforts were made to make it relevant to the cultural ecology of North Africa. It was too 'foreign' and thus could not touch the lives of the common people. Despite the fact that some success was harvested in that it produced eminent theologians and Church Fathers of the calibre of Origen, Athanasius and Clement, it could not compete with Islam, which appeared to have more bearing with the *Sitz im Leben* of the common people. Thus, Islam displaced it almost everywhere.

²¹ See O. E. Alana, 'Christianity and polygamy in Nigeria', *Journal of Arabic & Religious Studies*, 7 (1990), pp. 17-30.

²² John Beattie, *Other Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1964), p. 138.

their non-literate kinsmen and women in years back, but also in making strong cases for a more aggressive inculturation of Christianity in Africa.²⁵ One particular problem of this exercise is that African church leaders seem undecided as to how far it could go. Out of a possible sense of inferiority, they still turn a blind eye to the inculturation that takes place in some areas.

One such area relates to traditional healing practices. The importance attached to health among Africans is immense. To them, 'health is wealth', and they go to any extent to preserve it. In recent times, health has become an elitist commodity, quite beyond the reach of the common people as a result of one problem or another, ranging from poor economic situations of many African countries to self-centredness of some leaders whose only business in government is looting of public funds. In the state of helplessness, many Africans find an option in traditional healing. It is also more appealing because it is cheaper.²⁶ 'Spiritual' churches have become beehives of healing activities. Some of the 'spiritual' churches are still averse to any form of African medicine; their insistence is on fasting and prayer alone.

However, a number of them across Africa have gone far in the use of traditional medical practices in their healing ministries. Even some of those who do this cannot own up to it in public. They simply tell any

researcher or inquirer that they do not make use of traditional healing practices and they are always quick to point out that their church's constitution abhors such things. But our fieldwork among the Yoruba of Nigeria in the last decade clearly shows that some of the 'spiritual' churches that deny the use of traditional healing practices, in reality do use them. One may want to query such hypocrisy. Perhaps they are afraid of being ridiculed by the western-oriented churches and the elite who may view such practices as incompatible with Christianity. Did Jesus not interact with the common healing techniques or practices of his age, including those that were magical? He did, though always within a new context, epitomized by his salvific mission as the messianic Son of man.

As he is the ultimate role-model for all Christians, it cannot be correctly said that imitating Jesus is against the scripture. The bold efforts being made by some churches in the inculturation of their healing ministries, especially in making use of common traditional healing practices, should not be uncritically rejected. Jesus' practice in his day is analogous to what is going on in 'spiritual' churches in Africa. The genuine concern of all Christians should be on how this is done. The issue is beyond whether or not such a thing is scriptural. It is my belief that it is. The focus should be on ensuring that the essence of Christianity is not compromised in the process.²⁷

To ensure this is to see that the whole process is christocentric and theocentric. Christ and God alone must be at the centre of the healing

²⁵ It seems that the whole world has come to accept this reality in Africa as elsewhere. Even in academic circles, it is fast becoming the vogue these days to read the Bible against a particular African cultural context.

²⁶ A. O. Nwaka, 'Healing: The Biblical Perspective', *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, 7:1 (1992), p. 34.

²⁷ See Alana, 'Healing Techniques', p. 95.

exercises. If there are any deities or spiritual forces behind traditional healing practices, they need only to be banished in the name and blood of Jesus and he (Jesus) becomes the power of such healing practices. This indeed will be a true inculturation of Christianity in Africa and of course a sure Christianization of the rich African cultural heritage. The task is enormous but all it requires to get it accomplished is courage, and this should not be elusive any longer.

Conclusion

The message of Jesus on the relationship between Christianity and culture is clear in the very many ways in which the Master himself interacted with the two cultures in which he grew up and worked. He did not merely accommodate both the Judaeian and Graeco-Roman cultures of his day, but indeed went further to tap their most valuable currents for the benefit of humanity and for the glory of God. African Christians cannot do less. They have to follow the legitimate footsteps of Jesus. When Christianity arrived in England, the English people rightly

saw to it that it was anglicized, just as it had earlier been made to carry the imprints of the imperial Roman society.

It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that Africa is presently the centre of gravity of Christianity. This is in view of the seriousness with which Africans take Christianity in contrast with the relaxed way Christianity is now being practised in some western countries.²⁸ The current apparent lack of courage to prosecute an aggressive inculturation policy in respect of church matters by some African leaders must be abandoned. African Christians must now take the initiative to see to the devolvement of a truly African Christianity. This will be a service to mankind and to their Lord in which they cannot afford to fail.

²⁸ This view receives the support of western scholars. For example, see C. M. Tuckett, *Luke. New Testament Guides* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academy Press, 1996), p. 114; J. Drane, *Son of man: A new life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 8. Also see M. Prior, *Jesus the Liberator: Nazareth Liberation Theology [Luke 4: 16-30]* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academy Press, 1995), p. 195.

Sagacious Folly

*The bankrupt wisdom of an inverted world,
Reproaches sacrifice.
But the logic of the cross transcends sophistry,
To function on a deeper plane,
Where sacred folly is profound
And holy weakness strong.*

From *Becoming . . .* (poetry reflecting theology) by Garry Harris, Adelaide, South Australia. (used with permission)

Christian Missions and the Development of Higher Education in East Africa: 1920-1960

Robert K. Lang'at

Keywords: Initiation, training, culture, manual training, vocation, social control, agriculture, industrial education, colonialism, worldview, dependence.

I African Traditional Education

Every culture has its own traditional system of education. Africa is not an exception. The form of education found in each culture is designed to meet the needs of the people of that culture. Traditionally, the main purpose of education in Africa was to maintain the continuity of cultural leadership by transmitting to successive generations accumulated knowledge, acquired values, and standards of conduct. As Halley observes:

The African has his own methods of

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education in the form of character training . . . directed to fitting the youth to take his place in the traditional life of his group.¹

The training which in most cases took the form of initiation rites had special value and meaning in African society. They served not only as rites of passage for adolescents, but as a school where the initiates received instruction for adolescent conduct and responsible living in adulthood.

The instructions given to the initiates by the Kikuyu tribal group of Kenya, East Africa, are typical:

Reverence all members of your circumcision group. Guard your tongue. Do not associate with fools. Do not keep company with persons of underways. Fear everything bewitched or on which spell (or Curse) has been laid. Fear to draw the blood of near relations. He who is fleeing from justice need not trust to meeting a relative (he must not count on his help). He who keeps to himself avoids trouble. Wrong done in fun also brings its punishment. Do not go naked in the presence of your seniors. Be respectful to

¹ William Malcolm Halley, *An African Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 1207.

elders and matrons.²

Among the Kipsigis, reverence for all members of a circumcision group was a highly important aspect of the teaching given to the initiates. They were instructed to have a deep respect for one another. This respect was carried on into their leadership roles in the society. They were also instructed to be careful of what they did.

A person who is responsible must think through the issues before saying anything. They were warned not to make friends with irresponsible people. They were also warned not to murder their relatives or any one who has not committed criminal acts. Among the Kipsigis, there was a high penalty for anyone who murdered his relatives. He had to give many cows for compensation. Respect for the elderly was firmly stressed. The instructions were similar in other ethnic groups such as Chagga and Masai.

The girls, similarly, received their instructions during their initiation. The instructions concerned their behaviour toward men and their role of being wives in their society. Naomi Smith explains this well when she makes the following statement about the Kikuyu community:

All the time girls are in the initiation hut they are being instructed, that is to say, they teach each other what they know and an old woman is called in as their Mubudi (Instructress) . . . Before the girl may leave her hut, however, she has to be given final instructions as to her future conduct. . .³

According to Kenyatta, education of children among the Kikuyu was

completely in the hands of the parents and the baby-tender. The mother and the baby-tender provided the early education for the babies through their lullabies and other songs which embodied the teachings of the African society regarding an individual's role and status.⁴ In all tribal education, the emphasis was on a particular act of behaviour in a concrete situation. The boys worked with the father and the girls with the mother. The boys learned from their fathers and the girls learned from their mothers what their roles are in their families and society. The boys learn how to lead their families.

Leadership style is a cultural matter. It begins from childhood through observing the parents who serve as models. Our culture tells us how we should lead others. Kenyatta, who wrote particularly about the Kikuyu social tribal customs, stated:

Growing boys and girls learn that they have one thing to learn which sums up all the others, and that is the manners and deportments proper to their station in the community.⁵

One of those things learned included leadership. The whole Kipsigis society was graded by age and prestige. This was done in such a way that young children were aware of it. The educational system started at home where the children were prepared for what was expected of them by society. From birth the child was prepared step-by-step. Just as in the western world, the child participated in the equivalents of pre-school, kindergarten, grade one and eventually on to college.

The example of the Kipsigis peo-

² Naomi M. Smith, 'A Study of African Initiation Rites: in view of Offering an Adequate Christian Substitute' (M.A. Thesis, Columbia Biblical Seminary, 1961), p. 26.

³ Smith, 'African Initiation Rites', p. 28

⁴ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: The Hollen Street Press, 1965), p. 101.

⁵ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p. 106

ple demonstrates that the African societies had their ways of preparing and educating their youth to meet the needs of the society. In this form of education the society's values were internalized with less effort. These values then tended to dictate the behaviour of one's life.

At the age of six, the children were trained to get up at sunrise and take their breakfast between seven and nine o'clock. When there was no shortage of food, the children were fed three times a day — in the morning, about four in the afternoon, and again in the evening after dark. In those days there was no lunch as we know it today.

As the children grew older, they were taught how to look after lambs and kids. They brought them to their mothers for feeding and returned them back to their proper places as their mothers continued grazing in the fields. Children soon became experts at tethering the most obstreperous goats to pegs inside the house. Until they were old enough for initiation, they herded the sheep. They learned the division of labour at a very early age. By adolescence, the boys were expert at a man's job and girls at a woman's job.

Besides looking after the stock and manual work, children were taught to observe nature. Orchardson tells us that they show endless interest in the plant, animal and insect world among which they spend their days. Quite small children can name almost every tree, bush, grass or weed and describe where they grow and what their flowers and seeds are like; how the insects behave; where the birds nest and what they say when they sing.⁶

As in every culture which is self-reliant, children had their own play. The Kipsigis children had their popular pastimes of swinging on a swing made of strong vine from the forest and sliding down a slide made with wet earth. A special form of amusement among the Kipsigis children was asking hundreds of riddles. These were evidently of very ancient origin, as they were couched in archaic language.

Music seemed a natural habit, which was enjoyed from early childhood onward. Girls and boys learned to sing continuously while at work in the fields. Orchardson pointed out that after supper, the singers assembled by arrangement in the house of a person who was popular with children. Girls seem to excel as singers, and their dance movements were both more pronounced and more graceful than those of boys. There was no licentiousness. Orchardson tells us, 'Such conduct is not natural to the Kipsigis and is a most serious offence among children. Should it occur, the parent of the offender has to pay a cow as a fine, but it is very rarely necessary to invoke the punishment.'⁷ All these were included in the Kipsigis educational system.

African education was not head knowledge only but was an experience. Education was supposed to develop a life style: how one fits and live in his or her society. It was education which was responsible for the formation of a world view. Within the Kipsigis society, the family served as an educational centre.

The question might be raised, what does this have to do with the Christian mission and its work in higher education? It is well known that higher education is geared to prepare peo-

⁶ Q. Ian Orchardson, *The Kipsigis* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), p. 49.

⁷ Orchardson, *The Kipsigis*, p. 49.

ple for a life style, and not merely the world of work. It is important then to study and understand how societies, such as those living in Africa before the arrival of the Europeans, prepared their people for a living.

II European Education (1920-1945)

Nature and Purpose

European education brought a new direction. The education that the Europeans wanted Africans to receive was manual training. Training is not education but the development of skills for a particular job such as pushing the wheelbarrow. The environment of the Africans was modified by influences to which they themselves were culturally strangers. Halley pointed out that the Europeans, particularly the British colonialists, designed schools to equip Africans with the knowledge to deal with that modified environment and to equip them to survive under a new set of conditions. Therefore, the methods of education had to be changed. Halley informs us that the method of education had to be new, it had to be institutional and could not follow the traditional form of tribal instruction.⁸

Accordingly, the African child was introduced to a world of thought, of achievement and of conduct outside the experience of his parents and of his community. This access to new ideas was bound to make a break in his life. This was the beginning of African head knowledge divorced from life style. This was also the beginning of African educational dependence on the foreigner's knowledge and creativity.

The content of instructions given in African schools was coloured by the political objectives which the British colonialists wanted to achieve. For example, Sanneh tells us that education in the hands of missionaries was used as an instrument of conversion to Christianity and nurture. In the hands of conservative and some liberal philanthropists, education was conceived as a means of social control to instil in the African a proper attitude of subservience toward the white overlords, usually in connection with tilling the land and producing the raw materials needed to feed western industries.⁹

This was a kind of education which did not prepare people for a living, but instead it was a utilitarian education. It was not education that stimulated the mind to question issues in life, but it was education which taught the learner to follow the rule.

Tignor tells us that when the British became interested in African education, they created education based on stereotyped, racist and educationalist ideals found in Europe at that time. The educational goals proposed by the British educationalist were training Africans to know how to develop the rural areas for the purpose of producing raw materials for British industries. British colonialists did not intend to educate African to read and write, but to learn how to clear the bush, build gutters, and to push the wheelbarrow.¹⁰

Some European farmers were

⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: 1989), p. 127.

¹⁰ Robert L. Tignor, *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 205.

⁸ Halley, *An African Survey*, p. 1207.

unhappy about this kind of education because they were more interested in training Africans for agricultural services, that is, training artisans who would be employed in European agricultural sectors.

Missionary Schools

The colonial educators were sceptical of missionary education because of its emphasis on literacy training. Tignor tells us that a literary training for Africans was perceived by Europeans as not suited to the stage of African mental development as it existed at the time because it was thought the Africans were not yet ready to cope with highly abstract forms of thinking.¹¹

Holding this view of Africans' the colonial government, particularly in Kenya, started Machakos Industrial School in 1915 and tried to ignore missionary schools. The director who was in charge of African education then felt that the missionaries would not create the model schools that the colonial government wanted and that only the colonial government could create schools to serve as models to other educators in Kenya. Machakos Industrial School was intended to foster British colonial educational philosophy.

In this school, there was an emphasis on eye-hand training, and the school was run under a military style discipline. This discipline was imposed because of the belief that Africans were not yet ready for individual responsibility and required constant surveillance. This approach failed and the system of education in Kenya was broken down into three types of schools. The first type included schools which were intend-

ed to serve European needs. The second type was primarily the mission schools which were intended to bring about conversions and to get rid of African traditions. The third type of school included those intended to be established in African reserves and to serve African needs—modernizing and improving village life.

The British colonialists were in favour of fostering the third type of schools, and viewed mission school as disruptive. However, the commissioner of education defended mission schools even though he was a European colonist. He believed that Christianity was an indispensable stabilizing force.¹² He formed a commission composed of settlers, missionaries and government officials to suggest guidelines for Kenyan educational policies. The Africans were excluded from this commission. The commission rejected the idea of creating African teacher-training schools, and recommended increased government support for missionary schools.

The mission schools had an important role in shaping the education of Africans. The colonial government believed that Christianity would instil morality in African society. Because of this, the missionaries became the main providers of African education and they were aided by the colonial government.

The evangelical churches in East Africa were established by evangelical missionaries during the latter part of nineteenth century. The evangelicals were then defined as those who were scornful of secular education and other innovations which were believed to be not in line with their Christian faith. Almost all the early

¹¹ Tignor, *Colonial Transformation*, p. 205.

¹² Tignor, *Colonial Transformation*, p. 207.

missionaries sent to East Africa, particularly Kenya, came from the northern part of the United States. Many of them appeared to have been reared in rural communities and came from religiously conservative families that were Bible centred and mainly concerned with whether one's soul was saved.¹³

Studies show that between 1900 and 1914, of the 218 missionaries who were sent to Africa only three had attended universities and the rest attended religious institutions. The Bible institutes offered education which can be described today as narrow training. The two-year programme placed a strong emphasis on evangelical theological doctrine. These institutions were designed to prepare men and women for careers as Christian workers, Bible teachers, gospel singers and evangelists. The missionaries who were sent to East Africa carried the same views of education to their field of labour. Influenced by the doctrinal philosophies of these Bible institutes, the missionaries created very narrow and very strict evangelical institutions for Africans. This approach led to a belief that Christians should be confined to religious training, evangelism, theology and music.

Any other education that would improve one's intelligence, skills and worldview was viewed as worldly. This type of education influenced evangelical church leaders and other African leaders in general. Many of the later difficulties arose from the missionaries' insistence on these narrow and strict views. Missionary control of African education and Christianity was so inextricably interwoven, one had to be a professing

Christian to be allowed to enter the schools, even though one had no real desire to become a Christian. In this way, the role of the mission in determining African education was firmly established.

Christian education produced two kinds of Africans. The first were those who accepted the role of subservience to the policies of the missionaries. These people were never innovative in terms of church activities and education. They could be described as 'yes' people, who sought the approval of the missionaries before initiating any project in the church.

The second type of Africans were those who were educated in mission but never became subservient to the wishes of the missionaries. They became innovative and creative in their thinking and raised questions regarding their destiny. Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, and Julius Nyerere are good examples of this type. Kwame Nkrumah, for instance, went to the seminary to study to be a priest, but he later changed his goals and became a political liberator in Ghana.

The missionaries were the ones who brought changes in African traditional systems because they believed that the acceptance of Christianity required complete renunciation of the old traditions. A statement issued in 1938 by the interdenominational missionary council revealed the intensity of this belief. Hendrik Kramer, a professor of History of Religions at the university of Leiden in Holland, stated:

The missionary is a revolutionary and he has to be so, for to preach and plant Christianity means to make a frontal attack on the beliefs, the customs, the apprehensions of life and the work by implication . . . on the social structures and

¹³ Tignor, *Colonial Transformation*, p. 19.

bases of primitive society.¹⁴

The education provided for African evangelical Christians was and has continued to be very narrow in nature; the African themselves had no part in designing the curriculum. This is evident in an ongoing debate between African Christian leaders and missionaries. This debate centres on which form of education the Bible Colleges should embrace, that of the traditional western Bible Institute or that of the liberal arts college. The liberal arts education which is needed today in East Africa is often resented by some Christian nationals and expatriates on the grounds that it does not conform to the evangelical Christian point of view. It seems that many evangelical Christians are making the mistake that Tertullian made in the early church of separating the mind from the spirit.

Often some national and expatriate evangelists have quoted Acts 4:13 to defend ignorance for Christians. It seems that the rulers in Jerusalem wondered how the untrained laity could be able to speak with confidence, freedom and openness before the rulers, priests, Sadducees and others who had formal training in rabbinic schools. I am sure all of us would be amazed if a blue collar worker or a 'red neck' as American people might prefer to call them, walked into Harvard or Oxford or Kenyatta university and give a comprehensive lecture on the ontological argument for God's existence to a group of well informed scholars, and did it well. The scholars would raise the question, how did he

learn this? I am sure that this was what happened to the Sadducean party in Jerusalem.

Acts 4:13 was not, however, intended to dismiss the importance of Christian Education as some pastors and missionaries have taken the words to mean. Education is a tool to be used for good work. Sometimes, education has been used in wrong ways. For example, before the 1960s there were three groups who tried to dominate decision-making for African education in Kenya. The first, of course, was the colonial government, the second were the settlers, and the third were the missionaries. Each one of them had different goals for African education. The colonial government was more interested in keeping the people where they were. This interest was evident in a major controversy between the Indian and the European settlers over land, immigration and political representation.¹⁵ The European settler farmers demanded that Africans be trained to take the place of Indians as clerks and artisans. The Indians, who had been imported from India to work on the railway, had gone on strike demanding better wages and better living conditions. It was also more expensive to import Indians from their homeland. This led the Europeans to demand that Africans be given a technical education.

Some mission agencies, such as the Church of Scotland missions, were supportive of this view, while the Africa Inland Mission was not. The many interests attached to African education generated conflict between the settlers, the missionaries and the colonial government.

¹⁴ Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1969), p. 342.

¹⁵ Tignor, *Colonial Transformation*, p. 227.

Delamere, the representative of the settlers, argued that the country was not getting its money's worth in African education. He suggested that the students trained by the missionaries were of inferior quality and could not serve the settlers.¹⁶ Delamere was particularly critical of mission schools and argued that government grants should not be provided for them. Because of this disagreement, two kinds of education emerged in Kenya—technical and industrial education. Technical education was the kind of education in which Africans were trained to read and write and to acquire some knowledge of mathematics. This type of education would benefit the settlers who were interested in having Africans serve as clerks and bookkeepers on their farms. Industrial education consisted of manual training designed to improve life in African reserves and clear the land for the production of raw materials for British industries.

The settlers, led by Delamere, condemned mission technical schools and as a result mission education goals were jeopardized. Because of these conflicts, a new educational code was established by the colonial government in 1924. An advisory committee, composed of settlers, government officials and missionaries, was created to deal with African education. At this point, the colonial government took control of African education, and mission schools were marginalized.

To this day the perception that mission schools are marginal has remained, and this situation has been harmful for Christian institutions. It is often thought that those students in

Bible Colleges are not good enough for anything else. Is this true? Not at all! They are just as intelligent as any one else. They love the work of God and that has led them to make that choice.

III Christian Education

But what do we mean by 'Christian higher education'? We are talking about a well rounded education that provides all kinds of information to the learner, giving the learner the responsibility to make value judgments on how to use it.

In Africa we are calling for a broader Christian education for our young people. We find few liberal art colleges in Africa, although we have many traditional Bible schools which have served their purposes. The African Christians must make their own decision regarding Christian higher education without the influence of outsiders.

Many African Christian colleges remain in a close relationship with their western founders, who generously provide assets and services for their operations. While this is perceived as being liberal action, it is easily converted into a means of insidious control. Goran Hyden, social science research advisor to the Ford Foundation in Nairobi, wrote: 'A person's ability to control or influence somebody else resides in control over the things that the latter values or needs.'¹⁷

African colleges need services and finances provided by Christian friends. These activities should not be accompanied by the same kind of imperious controlling attitude which is

¹⁶ Tignor, *Colonial Transformation*, p. 210.

¹⁷ Goran Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1960), p. 31.

seen in the secular world in such bodies as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). For Christian Higher Education to be effective in Africa, the decision on the content and method of teaching must rest solely with Africans themselves. This education must prepare people for a living.

However, the vocationalized curricula of traditional Bible Schools does not seem to attract students today. The marginalization of Bible Colleges started with colonial education and has continued up to the present time. The perceived marginalization and lack of diversified curricula in these institutions have contributed to failure of Christian Higher education in mission schools.

The Christian educators of today should approach the world of education as reformers. The curricula must be designed with a vision to influence society. Jesus used two symbols to describe the influence that Christians should have on a non-Christian society. The first symbol is salt and the purpose of salt, as we know is flavouring and preservation of foods. Thus Christians are instructed to make their influence felt in society. They must work tirelessly to preserve Christian values in these changing societies. The second symbol is light. Jesus declared 'I am the light of the world' (John 18:2). He told the disciples: 'you are the light of the world'.

So Christians are to shed the light of God's truth and compassion in the world.

If we adopt the position that we are educating Christians who can approach society's issues with the Christian worldview, then we must work tirelessly to create Christian theological colleges which are accredited and accepted in the world of academia. Christians should be involved in shaping the worldview of secular academic life with a Christian perspective on issues facing society.

Inevitably, Christian colleges guided by this aim and wishing to confer respectable degrees must take account of the financial costs involved. This raises questions of fund raising and support, which is often sourced overseas. They need to avoid situations where this kind of funding is dependent on the supporting body approving of the programme and aims of the college. It would be unfortunate for African institutions to find themselves financially embarrassed because their philosophy and activities were judged to be unacceptable to their donors. Instead, the colleges should be encouraged to rely more fully on the prayer of faithful Christian people who understand and support the role of the colleges in providing a genuine Christian higher education for their African constituency.

The Long Weekend

*We live by the conflation of Friday and Sunday,
Products of the fusion of the act and the event.
Born of the life-sapping action that was Calvary,
And quickened by the life-giving event of the Empty Sepulchre.*

From *Becoming . . .* (poetry reflecting theology) by Garry Harris,
Adelaide, South Australia. (used with permission)

Books Reviewed

The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus: Embracing Change—Maintaining Christian Identity by Fredrick C. Holmgren and

Christ the Center by George A. F. Knight reviewed by Henry Rowold

Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical Images for Leaders and Followers by David W. Bennett reviewed by David Parker

The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War 1914-1918 by Robert D. Linder reviewed by Ken R. Manley

Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience by William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies reviewed by David Parker

A Basic Christian Theology by A.J. Conyers reviewed by David Parker

Book Reviews

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The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus: Embracing Change—Maintaining Christian Identity

by Fredrick C. Holmgren
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,
1999

ISBN: 0802844537
xviii+204 pp. Pb.

Christ the Center

by George A. F. Knight
Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1999
viii+88 pp. Pb

*Reviewed by Henry Rowold
Mission Professor of Theology,
Concordia Seminary, Saint
Louis, MO, USA*

The place of the Old Testament in Christian faith and theology has been a problem that has teased and

vexed biblical scholars and theologians from the days of the New Testament itself. Involved in that and extending from it are many related questions: the role of the Old Testament in the New Testament era church, the relation between Old and New Testaments, varied understandings of the place of the Old Testament as Scripture in Judaism and in Christianity, the relation of Judaism and Christianity and between Jews and Christians. These are some of the questions that Holmgren (USA) and Knight (Scotland) take up, lively questions, current, and close to the heart of Christian faith.

Holmgren's is a masterfully designed piece of scholarship. He begins with the prophetic corpus in the Old Testament, specifically the prophetic denunciation of Israel, but warns that this is better understood as self-criticism (and canonical Scripture!) than as divine rejection authenticating a supercessionist view

of Israel. The next steps discuss the reading of the Old Testament by the New Testament and by Jewish Christians of the New Testament era, and it is concluded that Christian writers were reading from faith in Jesus Christ toward the Old Testament, and thus selecting passages which corroborated or commended their faith. This leads to a discussion of diverse thinking about Israel in the New Testament. To illustrate how the New Testament applied the Old Testament Christologically, Holmgren presents two studies of the 'New Covenant' passage, Jer. 31:31-34, one with focus on Israel and the second with focus on Jesus as fulfilment of Israel.

Such Christological interpretation is the key to Holmgren's insistence that the Old Testament was and is an integral, non-separable part of the Christian Scripture. The New Testament affirms and incorporates the Old Testament into the Christian faith. What the Old Testament provided, the New Testament does not therefore need to reiterate. What the New Testament provides is clarity of revelation in Jesus Christ, which places the Old Testament, however, in a new faith context, certainly distinctive from the faith context it has in Judaism. In fact, Holmgren suggests that it may be best, both for Christian understanding of the Old Testament and for recognition of the place of the Old Testament in Judaism, to forego the term 'Old' (value judgement?) in favour of 'First'—which still reflects a relation between the testaments that 'Hebrew Bible' does not. Holmgren's final section studies Old Testament images used in the New Testament picture of Jesus, but also eventual credal statements about Jesus, by which time Christian theology has

entered a Greek cultural context.

Holmgren's approach is cautious and irenic, desiring to clarify the integrity of the Old Testament as Scripture, to assert that there are things new about the New Testament (namely Jesus Christ), yet withal to retain the integral connection of Old and New Testaments as one Christian Scripture. How convincing Holmgren is depends on the theological presuppositions of the reader. To a Jewish reader, Holmgren's confessional claims about the Old Testament as part of a Christian Scripture will not be accepted, but his recognition of a Jewish confessional claim about the Tanakh (Old Testament) will be. To a Christian reader, especially with a high view of Scripture, a variety of questions may surface, e.g. Holmgren's isagogical assumptions, or his rejection of a forward-looking (predictive) bent to the Old Testament in favour of a retrospective reading of the Old Testament by the New, or the absence of "revelation" as a substantive category in the book. How much credence would Holmgren give to the possibility that Jesus intentionally re-lived parts/themes of the Old Testament in order to fill them full, so that he himself, and not merely the testimony about him, is the bridge between the testaments?

Questions and variations aside, Holmgren has articulated core issues with clarity, but also with reverence, and has provided the Christian community with pointers toward a renewed and holistic view of Scripture in all its parts, with Christ as the centre.

Knight's concern is less for the relation between the two testaments, and more for an illustration and validation of Jesus Christ from an Old Testament/Hebraic perspective.

Continuing discussions he has pursued elsewhere over the years about the validity and preference of 'the Hebrew mind', Knight applies non-dualistic Hebraic thinking to various biblical-theological themes (e.g. the being of God, trinity, incarnation, resurrection, church). As seasoned a scholar and expositor of Scripture as Knight is, and as fresh as some of his insights are, these views have not found wide acceptance in any segment of the world of biblical scholarship. Added to that is a style that seems at times meditative and at times didactic, but never as engaging or persuasive as Holmgren.

The attention these works focus on the continuing questions of the relevance of the Old Testament and the centrality of Jesus Christ in Christian faith and Scripture is refreshing. While the reader may not agree with all conclusions, the church is well served by reflecting regularly and deeply on such fundamental questions. Hopefully, the reflection these books prompt will continue the conversations and the refinement of the issues.

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Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience

by William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000

ISBN 0-310-23507-3

233pp. Hb index

Reviewed by David Parker.

Spirit and Power sets out to present the 'foundations of Pentecostal experience' (as indicated in the subtitle) as a 'call to evangelical dialogue'. In so doing, the father and

son authors critique some standard Pentecostal views on issues such as the relation between spiritual gifts, holiness and baptism in the Spirit and healing in the atonement. They also call for greater distinctiveness from certain evangelical positions on hermeneutics and biblical theology which they say some Pentecostals have adopted uncritically as they have become more involved with the world of scholarly theology and biblical studies.

The most prominent and fundamental example of this is the view, repeated on many occasions throughout the volume, that evangelicals have failed to recognize Luke's distinctive theology of the Holy Spirit. Instead they have subsumed his witness to the dominant Pauline position which is made clear in his extensive doctrinal material. It is argued that evangelicals have consciously followed this line as a deliberative alternative to what they see as the hermeneutically defective procedure of the Pentecostals who draw so much of their distinctive position from the narrative passages of Acts rather than the more reliable doctrinal passages elsewhere in Scripture.

However, the authors argue that proper methods of biblical theology require that each author be given individual attention, without subsuming his views to those of others. If this procedure were followed, it would be obvious, according to the Menzies, that Luke always speaks of the Spirit in charismatic, prophetic and missiological terms as 'a prophetic enabling that empowers one for participation in the mission of God'. On the other hand, in Paul's pneumatology, the Spirit is given soteriological functions, which is never the case in Luke. (Paul, in fact, is said to be the first to make such an innovation.)

Paul's view of the Spirit is therefore more comprehensive than Luke's, who also never speaks of the Spirit 'as the source of moral transformation for the recipient'. It is argued that the Pauline use of the term *pneumatika* over against *charismata* in 1 Corinthians 12-14 indicates support for the Lukan position 'that Spirit-baptism is the "gateway" to a special cluster of gifts . . . associated with special revelation and inspired speech'.

According to the authors, who are both well known scholars, educators and missionaries of the Assemblies of God, the Lukan and Pauline views are therefore quite distinct although not contradictory. The Pentecostal belief in a two-stage model of the reception of the Spirit (for salvation and empowerment for ministry) is legitimately based on Luke, while evangelicals are dominated by the Pauline view in seeing the gifts and empowerment of the Spirit as intrinsic to Christian existence, thus rejecting the possibility of a two-stage process.

These matters of hermeneutics and biblical theology form the main topics in Part 1, titled, 'Theological Foundations'. Included in the discussion are extensive analyses of the work of key figures such as James Dunn, Gordon Fee and Max Turner. The second part discusses the implications of this position on hermeneutics and the appropriate methodology of biblical theology for distinctive Pentecostal beliefs, such as evidential tongues, signs and wonders, charismatic gifts and healing in the atonement. The 'dialogue' here is more often with the traditional Pentecostal positions, (but particular authors are not as prominent in the discussions) although evangelicals are also in mind.

The Menzies offer measured and sometimes rather qualified interpretation of some of these classic beliefs as they seek to work with sound hermeneutical principles to develop an adequate biblically based theological system. Thus they explain that while there may indeed be 'healing in the atonement', the simplistic presentation of this doctrine that is often heard, fails to take account of the progressive nature of salvation and overlooks the 'mystery between the brokenness of a fallen world and the in-breaking of God's future full redemption'. From this perspective, 'Healings, even if they are not routine, are an announcement that Christ did triumph at the cross and that ultimately he will restore all things.'

The volume consists of much material already published in article form, which accounts for its somewhat intrusive, piecemeal and repetitive nature. Unevenness is also apparent, chapter 12, 'The Providence of God', being uncharacteristically shallow and sermonic. Most of the chapters are not long, which sometimes affects the development of the argument; each one is carefully summarized and has helpful study questions appended.

Nevertheless, the book honestly and openly deals with a wide range of issues central to Pentecostal belief and experience and relevant to the dialogue with Evangelicals and other Christians. This self-conscious and confident but not uncritical presentation can only be welcomed, inviting as it does, careful reading and response.

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The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War 1914-1918

by Robert D. Linder

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196 pages, pb

Bibliog, index, illus

*Reviewed by Ken R. Manley,
Former Principal, Whitley
College, The University of
Melbourne.*

Robert D. Linder is Professor of History at Kansas State University, USA. The question of why an American scholar should be interested in the story of Australian evangelical Christian involvement in World War I is one which he answers in the preface to this important and fascinating study. Simply, the Great War is 'one of the great watersheds in modern history'; he has had a long family interest in the War; and, most significantly, he has been studying the history of the evangelical movement in Australia for over ten years. International collaboration in the history of evangelicalism is to be welcomed, and in Linder's case, is eminently successful. His mastery of relevant Australian historical scholarship is first class, but he brings a sympathetic outsider's perspective to his narrative. For the first time, the specific contribution of evangelical Christianity to this fundamental period in Australia's history is carefully told.

The importance of this study may be summarized. Linder has consciously sought to demonstrate that religious history is important for its impact on the larger society, a fact not always acknowledged by

Australian historians. The combination of religious and military history is a fascinating if complex theme, as Linder well demonstrates. In particular, he suggests that earlier studies need some modification in their interpretation of the part that religion played in the life of the soldiers. The predominant depiction of the Australian soldier is of a 'romantic larrikin', and there is much evidence for this stereotype. But, as Linder shows, there were many Christian soldiers who differed from this prevailing myth and their influence was significant. Their letters and diaries, well used by the author, reveal much deep spirituality and faith in the midst of the fearsome battles. Both larrikins and Christians fought side by side.

The title of the book is taken from a sermon preached by Adelaide Baptist minister, the Rev Peter Fleming, in July 1919 when he spoke of 'the daily anxiety and the anguish of the long tragedy'. The tensions for devout evangelicals as the war began in a surge of both imperial and national fervour are traced. How and why evangelicals participated in the war are explored, but there is also careful attention given to those who either were pacifists or came to doubt the way of the sword. These latter stories are perhaps the most interesting in the book, as many of these people and their activities are not well known. Figures from each of the evangelical denominations are identified, such as the Baptist, Rev Martin Luther Murphy (now, that's a name!). Though relatively few in number, their courage and integrity is to be honoured.

There were, of course, numerous evangelicals who served with great courage, such as the brilliant

Anglican priest Dr Everard Digges La Touche who died at Gallipoli and the young John Ridley who was seriously wounded but later became a leading evangelist in Australia. The role of evangelicals in the conscription debates that so divided Australian society on political and sectarian lines is traced in a separate chapter. The contribution of evangelical padres is significant and some, like the Salvation Army chaplain William 'Fighting Mac' Mackenzie, acquired a legendary status. Many served with remarkable courage. The churches had a special role to play in bringing comfort to the many who were bereaved.

The impact of the war on the evangelical movement was significant as the many vacant pews deprived the church of so many of its best young men. Even more devastating was the loss of faith by many as a consequence of the horrors experienced. Revival had not come, the nation had not been cleansed by the war as had been prayed and hoped in the

early days of the conflict. A spiritual malaise descended upon most churches. Sectarian strife continued.

Linder concludes that 'the contributions and losses of the evangelicals during the era far exceeded what has heretofore been estimated by historians' (p. 162). Their participation was diverse: in working energetically for the war cause, in the debates over conscription, in the opposition to the war on moral grounds, in their efforts to bring about social improvement during a formative period for the new nation, and in their efforts to alleviate the discomfort and pain of returned soldiers. Their role was probably 'decisive' in the conscription votes and in their ministry to military personnel.

Those interested in the history of evangelicalism generally and certainly those concerned to understand the spiritual tensions evoked by a nation at war will find much value in Linder's imaginative and convincing study.

FIRESTORM OF THE LORD

Stuart Piggin

Drawing extensively from the revival theology of Jonathan Edwards and Martin Lloyd-Jones, Stuart Piggin offers a systematic, biblical and pastoral study of revival. He writes from the head and the heart, with plenty of lively illustrations and real-life testimonies and quotations. Piggin defines revival, looks at its biblical basis, identifies the marks of genuine revival and studies the phenomenon thoroughly across historical and denominational lines. After laying this groundwork, Piggin offers much valuable and practical advice for individuals and churches on preaching, praying, planning and paying for revival. Finally, he explores the possibilities for God's choosing to work in such a way again in the next great awakening. Revival, he insists and proves, is a firestorm of the sovereign Lord through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Stuart Piggin is Master of Robert Menzies College, associate of the Department of History at Macquarie University; Principal of the School of Christian Studies; Principal of the Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity; Honorary Executive Director of the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute.

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ANTHONY C. THISELTON is professor of Christian theology and head of the Department of Theology at the University of Nottingham. He is also Canon Theologian of Leicester Cathedral. His other books include *The Two Horizons*, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, and (coauthor) *The Promise of Hermeneutics*.

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