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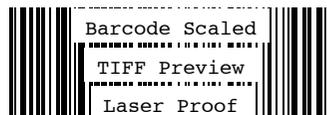
*Articles and book reviews reflecting
global evangelical theology for the purpose
of discerning the obedience of faith*



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Editorial—Celebrating Thirty Years

THIS year the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA TC), which publishes this journal, celebrates its thirtieth anniversary. The TC was formed at the Sixth General Assembly by the World Evangelical Fellowship (as it was then known) held at Chateau d'Oex, Switzerland, July 1974, with thirteen members drawn from ten countries to foster theological thinking, publication and education amongst evangelicals around the world. It was based on the successful Theological Assistance Programme which had been set up five years earlier by (Dr) Bruce Nicholls, a missionary theological educator from New Zealand, working in India, who had been appointed WEA's Theological Coordinator in 1969. John Langlois (Guernsey) was appointed as Administrator. Both Bruce Nicholls and John Langlois continued to lead the new body with outstanding service for many years.

One of the earliest initiatives, *Theological News*, is still being published after 34 years. *Evangelical Review of Theology (ERT)*, was established in 1977 as a result of a suggestion Rev. John R.W. Stott that there was need for a compendium to bring together and publish the best of international evangelical theology on a regular basis. For many years, ERT fulfilled this role, but now with the rapid growth of theological work around the world, it functions as a forum of global evangelical scholarship.

To honour the many leaders of the

Theological Commission, we have pleasure in marking the 30 year history of the TC by presenting articles by them, both new and re-published. (See *Theological News* for other details.) In this issue, the current Chair of the TC (since 1996), Dr Rolf Hille of Germany, writes from his own theological and spiritual tradition about the problem of theodicy, giving a finely argued biblical reflection in the context of the modern criticism of religion which fully acknowledges the deep-rooted nature of the problem but at the same offers the firm hope of the Christian gospel.

We also present an article from the second Chair of the TC (1975-80), Dr Arthur M. Climenhaga, a former missionary to Africa and theological educator and church leader in US, now retired and living in Pennsylvania. His paper on universalism was originally delivered to a missionary congress in Wheaton in 1966 but, apart from the specific references and illustrations, is surprisingly relevant to present conditions.

Other papers in this issue focus on the Christian mind and learning (Allison M. Howell and Lee Wanak) and the ethical problems of the genetic revolution (J. J. Davis); Paul Scotchmer concludes with a stimulating Bible study on work, marriage and freedom.

In this anniversary year, we have the pleasure of introducing a new modern graphic design to our presentation. Our aims and editorial direction remain unchanged.

David Parker, Editor

Mission and Neo-Universalism

Arthur M. Climenhaga

KEYWORDS: *Salvation, judgement, gospel, exegesis, rationalism, biblical authority, evangelism, grace.*

THE writer of the Ecclesiastes said so well, 'There is no new thing under the sun,' for ancient heresies have a way of reappearing in new garb. The cosmological universalism of an Origen not only comes to flower in a nineteenth-century universalism but bursts out anew in modern approaches to an old subject. Variations there are in expression, but too often the mood established is reminiscent of the Edenic query of the serpent, 'Yea, hath God said?' to the divine affirmation, 'In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die'. In view of the fresh garb and modified approach to an older speculation, we speak of this movement as neo-universalism, or 'the new universalism'.

Among the anti-Nicene fathers Origen stands out as the first major thinker to develop a system of universalism. On the basis of an allegorical

interpretation of Scripture he developed the theory that all men (and even fallen angels) ultimately would be redeemed; thus the term 'cosmological universalism'. This cooperation of divine grace and human activity (synergism) reached evidently into heaven itself so that conceivably man could fall out of heaven by active choice and start the cycle of redemptive grace all over again.¹ The church of the succeeding centuries rose up in opposition to this universalistic thesis both in creedal and council definitions and prescriptive acts. The developing church stood firmly on the biblical teaching of the lostness of man, the necessity of salvation by the reconciliation of Jesus Christ on the Cross, the eternal felicity of the redeemed, and the eternal

1 Cf George Park Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh : T. T. Clark, 1896), pp. 112f.

Arthur M. Climenhaga (STD, LL D, DD) was appointed to the WEA (then WEF) Theological Commission at its formation in 1974, and was Chairman 1975-80 and vice-Chairman, 1975, 1980-83. An ordained minister of the Brethren in Christ Church (1938), he has served as a Bishop in Zambia and Zimbabwe and in the US, and as General Conference Secretary. He holds a doctoral degree from Los Angeles Baptist Seminary and honorary degrees from Houghton College and Ashland Theological Seminary. He has been President of Beulah College Ca and of Messiah College Pa, Dean of Western Evangelical Seminary and Director of Academic Affairs, Ashland Theological Seminary. He was Executive Director, National Association of Evangelicals (US) in the mid-1960s when he delivered this paper (slightly edited), the first of our 30th anniversary series, to the 'Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission', held at Wheaton College, Illinois, April 9-16, 1966. Abbreviated versions have appeared in the official proceedings of that congress (edited by Harold Lindsell, Word Books, 1966), and of the Berlin Congress on World Evangelisation, One Race, One Gospel, One Task (World Wide Publications, 1967).

damnation of the wicked who died in their sins.

In the nineteenth century once again the belief in ultimate, universal salvation entered the life of the Christian church. At first many preachers of universalistic salvation remained more or less orthodox in other theological tenets. The principle of universalism was advocated on the basis of the eternal decrees of God. God in his sovereign grace was seen eternally predestinating all men to ultimate salvation. Gradually, and in some cases more swiftly, the Universalist ministers of the day not only denied other tenets of the Christian faith, such as the deity of Christ, the fact of the Trinity, or the authority of Scripture, but they openly espoused looser forms of conduct than the generally accepted norms of the day.

Once again the main stream of the Protestant denominations rose in strong opposition to the universalistic assumptions being propagated. As a result the Universalist denomination gradually atrophied. On one hand large numbers joined forces with the Unitarian movements. On the other, certain leaders were converted and entered or re-entered the ministries of the main denominations and churches.²

In all of this it is noteworthy that both in the Origen-istic heresy and in the development of nineteenth-century universalism, the main stream of the church stood firmly against the move-

ments as heretical. The early church of Origen's day and the Protestant church of the nineteenth century took their stand on eternal salvation and eternal damnation on the basis of the teachings of Christ in the four Gospels, the amplifications of Paul and other New Testament writers, and the inner meanings in the imagery of the Book of Revelation with respect to teaching on heaven, hell, judgment, eternal punishment, lostness of man, redemption alone through Jesus Christ, and eternal bliss. From this position came the sense of urgency to fulfil the commission of Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16, and Acts 1:8.

A New Universalism

What then of the day in which we live? Once again a universalistic interpretation has been introduced into the theological thinking of the church. This time, in inverse ratio to the previous position of the church, one senses a spirit of tolerance on the part of the main stream of the church towards universalistic assumptions or directions of thought. Universalism is rapidly advancing in the theological expression of certain accepted leaders in Protestant churches—a striking reversal of earlier trends. In modern Roman Catholic theology there may be a parallel development which the Second Vatican Council apparently has stimulated by an extension of the notion of implicit faith and baptism by desire.³

2 For an illuminating discussion of the theological and moral trends of the preaching and teaching of nineteenth century Universalists. see the interesting volume contemporary to that day by Matthew Hale Smith, *Universalism Examined, Renounced, Exposed* (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1842).

3 J. I. Packer has developed this thesis somewhat at length in his first lecture of the 1965 Payton Lecture Series, Fuller Theological Seminary, 'The Problem of Universalism Today'.

Following the Second World War, and particularly in 1949, forthright expression of 'new universalistic' thinking was evidenced by Dr. J. A. T. Robinson in his exchange of views with Professor T. F. Torrance in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*.⁴ Subsequent writings by Dr. Robinson (now the Bishop of Woolwich)⁵ and Nels F. S. Ferre,⁶ and other theologians, all pointed in a greater or lesser degree to the concept of the ultimate salvation of all.⁷

The current climate of thinking in certain sections of the ecumenical movement is clearly seen in the provocative work by D. T. Niles, entitled *Upon the Earth*. This work in the final analysis represents, as Bishop

Lesslie Newbigin states, 'A unique effort of cooperative thought by many Christians of many nations and churches'.⁸ Dr Niles asks the question, 'Will everyone be saved?' After a fairly lengthy discussion in which a hiatus in thought is developed, Niles states,

The New Testament does not allow us to say either Yes or No to the question: 'Will all men be saved?' and by preventing us from doing this it forces on us the question: 'Will you fulfill your share of the task to which God has called you in the church—the task of making Jesus known and lived, confessed and obeyed, by all men in every area of life?'⁹

Concurrent with this line of thinking is a statement by Edward Farley: 'I am assuming that all men in some sense are the objects of God's reconciling activity, and therefore at the point of ultimate destiny the distinction between believers and unbelievers, heaven and hell, is overcome by the victory of God.'¹⁰

With the breaking of concepts

4 Dr Robinson wrote in favour of a new universalism in his article, 'Universalism—Is It Heretical?', *Scottish Journal of Theology* (SJT), Vol. 2, No. 2 (June, 1949), pp. 139-155. Professor Torrance questioned the position in his article, 'Universalism—or Election', *SJT*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (September, 1949), pp. 310-318.

5 See J.A.T. Robinson, *In the End God...* (London: James Clarke, 1950) and *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963) Also cf. the rebuttal by Robinson to Professor Torrance in the article, 'Universalism—A Reply', *SJT*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (December, 1949).

6 E.g., Nels F. S. Ferre, *The Christian Understanding of God* (London: SCM, 1951). See specially Chapter Nine, 'The Work of God in the Last Things'. Also cf. Ferre, *Atonement and Mission* (London: London Missionary Society, 1960).

7 Prior to 1949 the theological writings of Karl Barth indicate a universalistic trend. While Karl Barth denies that he is a universalist, the development of the triumph of grace in the *apokatastasis* points in a greater or lesser degree to the concept of the ultimate salvation of all. See G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).

8 Cf. the statement on the book jacket concerning Dr Niles' work which says, 'Its arguments and judgements have been thoroughly examined through long and searching debates among Dr. Niles and his associates in the Department of Missionary Studies of the World Council of Churches.'

9 For the full treatment, see Niles, D. T., *Upon the Earth: the mission of God and the missionary enterprise of the churches* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1962), pp. 92-98. Quotation from p. 96

10 Edward Farley, 'Dimensions of Death in the Life of Faith,' *Pittsburgh Perspective* (journal of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), Vol. VI, No. 1, March 1965, p. 10.

embodying a spirit of 'new universalism' into the current ecclesiastical scene and theology, we are constrained in the context of our deliberations in this Congress on the Worldwide Mission of the Church to ask:

- 1 What in essence is the new universalism;
- 2 How, in the light of concepts of Church mission, is it manifested?
- 3 Where, in the light of neo-universalism, is our Mission?

I. The Essence of the New Universalism

The New Universalism is an expression of the belief that the Bible has a strain of universalism in it. Several classes of Scripture are produced which allegedly imply a universalistic scheme the ultimate reconciliation of all men.

First, there are passages which purportedly predict the actual salvation all men, passages such as the following:

Jesus' statement that if he should be lifted up, he would draw all men to himself (John 12:32).

Pauline statements as found in

- Ephesians 1:10: Paul's prediction that all things will be brought into unity in and under Christ.
- Romans 5:18: 'As through one man's transgression judgment came upon all, so through Christ shall the many be made righteous again.'
- Philippians 2:9-11: 'at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.'
- 1 Corinthians 15:22-28: Paul speaking of the final triumph of the kingdom of Christ, the subjection of all things to him, including death the last enemy, and thus God finally being all in all.

Peter's reference to the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).

Second, there are passages which allegedly consist of announcements of God's will to save all men, such as:

- 1 Timothy 2:4: 'God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.'
- 2 Peter 3:9: 'God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.'

Third, there are passages which allegedly declare that God stands now in such a relation to all men that they must be saved. His present relation to them supposedly involves ultimate salvation for them. There are such passages as:

- 2 Corinthians 5:19: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.'
- Titus 2:11: 'The grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared.'
- Hebrews 2:9: 'By the grace of God he tasted death for every man.'
- I John 2:2: 'Christ Jesus is the propitiation not for our sins only but for the whole world.'

Fourth, in the same vein as the above, an attempt is made to equate Jesus' statement in Luke 12:58 and 59, and especially the words, 'I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence till thou hast paid the very last mite,' as an expression of purgatorial and expiatory suffering. Or again in such Scriptures as Matthew 16:19 or 18 :1, 8f. and John 20:23, the interpretation is that Jesus is speaking in the terms of binding and loosing and remitting of the authority and intercession of the church reaching beyond this life and beyond this world although not necessarily beyond the last judgment.

From Paul's writing the new universalism proponents cite the difficult passage in 1 Corinthians 15:29, and the potency of intercessory baptism of the dead as an evidence of Pauline hope for redemptive processes beyond the grave. For them there is a feeling that the new universalism shadowed in outline in 1 Corinthians is fully worked out in Romans. The argument is that as man's Fall is universal, so divine deliverance is set forth as including all.

Exegetical Problems

Here, then, is an attempt to develop a concept of universalism on the basis of biblical proof-texts. However, such a new universalism developed on this basis can be so stated only on the grounds of a fragmented usage of Scripture, not on an exposition of the Scripture in total wholeness and context. Scriptures used to buttress claims of universal redemption, when taken in the total context of the scriptural passage, or when juxtaposed with contextual Scriptures which clearly imply that some do perish, can be shown to have a different meaning entirely.

For example, we noted that in Acts 3:21 Peter talks about the restoration of all things, but then two verses later (v.23) we hear him saying, 'And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.' In the light of those who will perish, the restoration speaks of that time when 'Jesus Christ would come back again from heaven and the whole world would experience the glad "times of restoration" of which all the poets and prophets have sung. Forgiveness of

sins has been made possible by the first coming of Christ, by his sufferings and death; but universal blessing is conditioned upon his appearing a second time. Every repentant believer is hastening that day, and such messages as this of Peter lead men to repentance.'¹¹

Or again, note Paul, who in Ephesians 1:10 speaks of the heading-up of all things in Christ, declaring in Ephesians 2:3 that some are the children of wrath. He states in Ephesians 5:5 that such have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Also, Paul speaking in 1 Corinthians 15:25 of the subjecting of all things to Christ, can be understood and interpreted only in light of 1 Corinthians 1:18, where he writes of those who are perishing, to whom the cross of Christ is foolishness. And Paul, speaking in Philippians 2:9 of every knee bowing before Christ, goes on to aver in Philippians 3:19 that there are some whose end is 'destruction'.

Perhaps most telling of all is the misuse of the statement of Jesus that if he be lifted up, he would draw all men to himself (John 12:32). When we remember the clarity of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in the four Gospels on the subject of hell, the fire that is not quenched, the issues of judgment, then the insufficiency of the new universalism-view of even this Scripture becomes more evident. 'To draw all men' is entirely different from 'to save all men'. The Spirit of God can draw even where the heart of man remains in utter rebellion.

¹¹ Charles R. Erdman, *The Acts: An Exposition* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1919), p. 39.

We may speak a word of appreciation for those who use biblical quotations. But where such quotations are used out of context, we may well query what the essence of the proposed interpretation may be. While there is a liberal use of quotations from Scripture by some of the advocates of universalism, this does not mean that the proponent of the new universalism quotes his Bible as the word of an authoritative, infallible Scripture. He still subscribes to varying views of higher criticism not consonant with the evangelical position that the Holy Scriptures were verbally inspired by God, that the Bible constitutes the authoritative, fully trustworthy Word of God.

The neo-universalist, by his very attempt to make certain Scriptures speak in a contrary direction to other Scriptures, inherently rejects the positive-authoritative view of the Scriptures. He may well do it on the grounds that it is unpalatable to the modern scientific mind. But we repeat again, in a most peculiar manner he takes proof-texts (often out of context and with highly questionable exegesis) and ascribes to such a sense of infallibility at variance with his usual biblical modes of interpretation. This is done, therefore, not from an objective stance on the Bible as the Word of God in its totality, but rather from a subjective position in which 'I accept this from the Bible as being authoritative to me in this situation'. In this the element of human reason and judgment versus divine revelation is most apparent.

Biblical authority

On the other hand, evangelicals today stand in the historical stream of Chris-

tianity, maintaining that God has given man a supernatural revelation in the Bible. Such revelation is a disclosure by God to man of himself or of his will beyond what he has made known by reason or the light of nature. Such revelation is unique and exclusive in its written form and in the person of Jesus Christ. Conversely, the tendency of the new universalism proponent is to claim that God is too great, too unknowable to reveal himself in a single, once-for-all revelation.¹² The revolt may even go so far as to deny a unique revelation in history, that God actually made himself known in a particular person at a particular time.

Where God speaks in an infinite variety of ways, but never decisively, man is thrown back on himself to determine how to reach ultimate truth. He seeks through his reason or intuition to find the answer. One senses the new universalist taking this position.¹³ Having stated that God cannot be known alone in a revelation, the door is open for speculative thought as to his character, purposes, and program.

Thus, the new universalist bases his doctrine of eternal destiny on a development of the concept of God as a God of love. Equating divine love with human love, he patterns God after man. If man would not confine any

¹² In Nels F. S. Ferre, *The Christian Understanding of God*, Chapter Seven, 'The Work of God in Revelation,' is most pertinent. See especially pp. 178f. for the attitude on infallibility and inerrancy.

¹³ For a fuller elaboration of the discussion above see Louis L King, 'New Universalism: Its Exponents, Tenets, and Threats to Missions', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer 1965), pp. 3f.

human being, no matter how perverse, to eternal suffering, neither purportedly is God capable of such retribution. Hell there may be, but it 'will be adequate to cause the sinner to know that the strange country is not good for him and to come to himself enough to want to go back to his father and home'.¹⁴

In this we see the process of human reasoning which is out of accord with both the climate of historic Christianity and the Scriptures. The presumptions of the neo-universalist, and particularly his usage of biblical proof-texting, can stand only if the belief in the authority of Scripture is rendered ineffective. Thus we declare the neo-universalist has no right to lay hold of proof texts because he does not subscribe to the authority and infallibility of Scripture.¹⁵

Background factors

In considering the essence of the new universalism, we may well question why such a theological development has occurred in the context of quotations of Scripture to buttress a viewpoint. One suspects that at the point doubt enters concerning the infallibility and authority of any area of the Bible, a propensity to move into further areas of human reasoning becomes apparent. For instance, the downward trend in statistical results of Christian

evangelism enterprises and an exploding world population with a resultant sense of hopelessness in the task may consciously or unconsciously have had significant influence in the development of new universalism thinking. A leading evangelical theologian, Bernard Ramm, who certainly does not accept universalism, analyses possible reasons for a universalist position being taken when he says:

The first cause for universalism gaining a new foothold in contemporary Christianity is that the task of world evangelism seems so hopeless. It was the burning hope of the great missionary statesmen of the 19th century that the world could be evangelized in one generation. If each convert would win but one more convert in the space of one generation, the entire world would hear of the Gospel of Christ!

The situation appears far differently to the missionary statesmen of the 20th century. Missionary evangelism proceeds at a slow rate. Only one-half of one percent of Japan's millions are Christian. The figures are equally discouraging for India, China, and Indonesia.

But there is a factor more discouraging than the slow process of missionary evangelism. That factor is the world-population explosion. Modern medicine and sanitation introduced to African and Asian countries are having a boomerang effect.... Populations are literally booming and that at a geometric ratio. India alone increases from 12 to 14 million a year! The population of the earth at the year A.D. 2000 will be fantastically large. The

¹⁴ Ferre, *The Christian Understanding of God*, p. 229. The context to the phrase bears out, the writer believes, the interpretation as given in the setting of the phrase here. See pp. 228f.

¹⁵ Harry Buis, *The Doctrine Of Eternal Punishment* (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957), p. 115. Buis discusses the scriptural implications involved.

problem of Christianity is no longer whether it shall reach these people, but rather it is in danger of being engulfed by them.

The evangelistic and missionary statesmen are faced with a decision: do we write all of these countless people out of the kingdom and proclaim them lost, or in an act of Christian generosity do we write them all in with a doctrine of universalism? If we write them out, then this reduces Christianity to a small band among earth's millions. It also means that the lives of the vast throngs of heathen are meaningless for meaningfulness is found only in Christ. To write them all in means that every life is meaningful even though lived without a consciousness of the saving work of Christ. Thus universalism saves significance for the Christian Church and the millions of lives upon the face of the globe.¹⁶

Ramm's analysis of the situation and the resultant rise of neo-universalism undoubtedly is true of too many who at one time may have been orthodox in belief. And yet as we think of such, do we not stand amazed at the lack of comprehension of the biblical statement, 'Evil seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving many and being deceived' and the biblical command, 'Occupy till I come'? To be so discouraged that you cast away theological moorings is to be utterly lacking in eschatological comprehension. We see again the subjective rather than objective characteristic of such

thinking. 'I feel disturbed, therefore, I must change my stance' rather than, 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh and shall declare a decree.'

The challenge of the hour then is to recognize the validity of any and all evangelistic enterprises which are both relevant to the hour and based on the full authority of the biblical message. The essence of that message we shall see in the third major point of this discussion.

II. The Manifestation of Neo-Universalism

In the view of the 'what' of the new universalism, we come to the 'how' of its manifestation, especially as it applies to our consideration of its impact on missions and evangelism. If the theological development of a new universalism concept could have remained sealed off in the inner chambers of theological dialogue, we might not have felt the sharp impact of its presence today. But in a practical way, the concept has burst over into the arena of missions, evangelism, and other church enterprises.

'Missions' and 'Mission'

Here in this Congress we are using the term 'mission' in a more traditional vein. By it we refer to the implication of such Scriptures as Matthew 28:19-20, and Romans 10:8-18. However, one suspects that the increasing use of the term 'mission' in certain theological circles to a certain extent may be an outgrowth of the invasion of universalistic concepts into current church and missions programs. An example of this can be found in the statement, 'From Missions to Mission'.

¹⁶ Bernard Ramm, 'Will All Men Be Saved', *Eternity* (August, 1964), pp. 22, 23.

To some, quite frankly, this has become a pet type of cliché, more or less innocuous, just a new term, no more, no less. Basically such still conceive of the term mission as embodying the concept of the Great Commission just as definitively as the former usage of missions.

Or again, the word may be used as an attempt to emphasize the sense of total church involvement in witness to a total world. Here 'mission' demands the elimination of the seeming dichotomy in the concepts of foreign and home missions or of missions on one hand and service situations on the other. The argument is that joining the two connotes the total involvement of the entire church. One professor of missions puts it like this:

The frontiers of the mission are no longer at geographical far ends of the earth, but are wherever there are men and groups unreconciled to God and fellow men in Jesus Christ. This does not lessen responsibility for points and peoples overseas, but it does mean the disappearance of a sharp distinction between mission and evangelism. The churches within the Church must now be concerned with the total witness to the total world.¹⁷

Provided one properly understands the intent of the use of the idea of reconciliation, there can be little quarrel with this statement. However, lest it seem to be a case of semantics to stress mission as lessening the import of mis-

sions, and therefore much ado about nothing, we should look more sharply to see if another concept may not be back of the terms 'mission,' 'church mission,' 'mission of the church'.

Sometimes people use terms because of a bent for new phrases, or to get away from platitudes, or because they are merely ignorant of the inner essence of the meaning or intent of words. Terms so often have a way of becoming relative. The sense of the absolute in the definitions of words increasingly is being lost.

The problem of word relativity is to be seen most sharply in theological terminology. Whereas formerly the simplicity of a fundamental versus liberal expression was one of sharp definition (e.g. Jesus, Christ, the Redeeming Son of God over against Jesus the Man, a great Leader), now one must probe behind the term or title used, the word spoken, to ascertain what is really meant. When a preacher or scholar speaks of the Incarnation or of the Deity of Christ, just what does he mean? Is he giving himself an out by some mental reservation in which he uses the word but does not quite mean what the evangelical means by it? Is he speaking as does Nels Ferre of the Incarnation and mean by it the juncture of the Logos—the Christ—with the human Jesus at some given point within the life of Jesus?¹⁸ Can he even state he believes in the Incarnation without the necessity of the virgin birth, even with the suggestion that Jesus could be the illegitimate son of a

¹⁷ R. Pierce Beaver, *From Missions to Mission* (New York: Association Press, 1964), p. 108.

¹⁸ For the development of this concept, see Ferre, *The Christian Understanding of God*, Chapter Seven and note particularly pp. 190f.

German mercenary?¹⁹ One is convinced that within the demythologising concept of a Bultmann, the use of myths by a Robinson, or the philosophical relativism of a Ferre, this too often is true.

We suggest, then, that the same process could well be true in the movement of the term 'missions' to 'church mission,' or 'mission of the church'. We must repeat we certainly are understanding of any movement to combine home missions, foreign missions, relief and welfare work, and service ministries into one agency where this is functional and administrative and is effected with a theological motivation of worldwide concern to effect the Great Commission. However, questions are raised when an ecumenical leader declares:

At the same time we are forced to contemplate the prospect of a giant and increasing jumble of programs and relationships if these two streams of 'mission' and 'inter-church-aid-and-service' continue to run in separate channels. In Europe there has been a tendency to conceive 'mission' in a rather narrowly evangelistic sense. In organizational terms, therefore, the Division of Interchurch Aid, Refugees and World Service has a mandate covering virtually all the action programs of the word church except evangelism. On this continent, by contrast, the comprehensive understanding of mission has persisted and expanded.

Unless we are to confine mission to verbal evangelism—which means

largely ineffectual evangelism—there is no way of maintaining a clear distinction between mission and services on either practical or theological grounds.²⁰

Theology of mission

We ask what is really meant here. Is this a movement pressing for the joining the two areas of missions and service purely on a functional basis, a basis which we have suggested can make sense biblically, or is it an attempt to get away from the dichotomy felt between what is termed a rather narrow evangelistic sense and a wider area of service? What is implied in alleging that verbal evangelism means largely ineffectual evangelism? What kind of evangelism, what kind of theology, what type of program is envisaged under the 'church in mission'?

If the joining of terms as stated refers only to a method of mission, a new theological direction is not necessarily taking place. But where the inference that 'verbal evangelism' is ineffectual or 'evangelistic effort' is narrow is drawn from a change in the message of mission, then the course is sharply set in a new direction. Such a change can be seen in any suggestion that we need today a death of traditional symbols such as heaven as the abode of saved souls and hell as the place of torment for the damned. To speak of evangelism in mission as 'plucking brands from the burning' or to look upon the urgency of mission as inherent in the lostness of humanity

19 Ferre, *The Christian Understanding of God*, p. 191.

20 David M. Stowe, 'A New Look at an Old Subject' (pamphlet), pp. 3-5.

without Christ is considered as being irrelevant to the life of modern man.²¹

What happens then can be seen in at least six propositions we deduce from a presentation by Dr. Pieter de Jong entitled, 'The Difference the Gospel Makes'.

1. Evangelism has cosmic implications.

'We can regain a sense of urgency only if we are clear about the difference the gospel makes in every area of life. Evangelism has cosmic implications.'

2. Man under God is the master of nature.

'Where the good news of creation and redemption is proclaimed the world becomes *world*. Thus, it is no longer regarded as a divine reality which must be influenced by magic or religious practices. Instead, there is born a true secularity in which man under God is the master of nature.'

3. Man is called to become co-creator with God and to help Him in leading the world to its final goal.

'The right interpretation of the doctrine of creation leads to the deification of the world and to the sanctification of man's active life. Through the good news, man is set free to make himself and his own world. Through the gospel man is called to become co-creator with God and to help Him in leading the world to its final goal.'

4 The gospel with its concern for one's neighbour becomes a penetration of this value into other cultures and religions.

'Under the influence of the good news a human life is considered worth more than before. The gospel demands concern for one's neighbour; and we can almost speak of an "osmosis", or penetration, of this value into other cultures and religions. This remains a fact even if Christians themselves have often disregarded this principle, both as individuals and as groups.'

5. The gospel is the impetus for a converging trend.

'The United Nations would be inconceivable apart from the fact that there is in the human race a converging trend of which the gospel is the impetus and Pentecost the beginning.'

6. The Lord of the Church is the Lord of the world.

'The Lord of the Church is the Lord of the world. Many people in their daily work serve God without knowing it, and the Church gathered in worship offers thanks to God on behalf of the world.'²²

In this light the case now made for the mission of the church is that it is the process of informing men that they are in fact redeemed by Christ and should start living accordingly. This precludes having to win them to Christ. As Dr. Bernard Ramm summarizes the position, 'The missionary does not

²¹ Cf. Pieter de Jong, 'Evangelism in Contemporary Theology', chapter 3 in Gordon Pratt Baker (ed.), *Evangelism and Contemporary Issues*, (Nashville: Tidings, 1964).

²² Pieter de Jong, 'Evangelism in Contemporary Theology', pp. 21, 22, 23.

bring Christ to India or Africa, for Christ is already there, being the universal Saviour of all men. The missionary comes to announce the universal lordship of Christ and summons men to acknowledge it in their lives.²³

In the broadest sense the implication is stated by Robert Beach Cunningham:

The good news is that God loves the world, and that, in Christ, He has given Himself to humiliation and death for the redemption and renewal of this world. Thus, for the Church to witness in the city means simply that some sinning human beings who have become aware of God's loving action in history are sharing with other sinning human beings who, as yet, have not come into this awareness. In other words, sinners who know that they have been reconciled of God are seeking to tell other sinners, who do not know this that they too have been reconciled to God.²⁴

When it comes to the scriptural demands of the gospel for salvation and the statement that few will be chosen out of the many who are called (Matthew 20:16), the interpretation of 'mission' now affirms concerning this imperative,

In these sayings, and many others

like them, our Lord is speaking about the movement of the Kingdom which He has come to inaugurate and the few who, at all times, will yield to its pressure and share in the tasks. The words 'salvation' and 'eternal life' have also this meaning of participation in the life and activity of God in Christ in the world. (Mark 10:20) ... In this sense 'salvation' is actually the experience of the few. But the question still remains concerning the final end of all.²⁵

Universalism and mission

The movement of the concepts of the new universalism in the program of 'church mission' now becomes clearer. It connotes once again a sense of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God and then goes beyond to suggest that service becomes the act of reconciliation of the 'church in mission'. In this concept, sin is asserted to be not an individual act which must be dealt with by the message of reconciliation in personal redemption but rather the corporate deed by which man is alienated from God. Corporate sin rends the fabric of the human and makes peace a fugitive. To reweave the torn fabric and have peace restored there must be a coming once more into a right relationship with God. But this coming will be on a corporate end not an individual level. This leads to the next step, the feeling that if missions and evangelism enterprises are going to witness to peace, missionary and evangelism bodies ought far more visi-

23 Ramm, 'Will All Men Be Saved?' p. 23. This is an objective analysis by Dr. Ramm and does not in any way express his personal viewpoint and theological position.

24 Robert Beach Cunningham, 'Evangelism and the Challenge of the City', Chapter 10, Baker (ed.), *Evangelism and Contemporary Issues*, p. 87. This quotation is the position held by the author!

25 Niles, *Upon the Earth*, p. 94.

bly to reflect the complete reconciliation of the nations and races that is accomplished in Christ.²⁶

A further step in the whole process of development in the concept of the mission of the church can then be the belief that all religions may be brought under the beneficent reconciliation of God through a sense of inter-religion harmony. It is but a step to the assertion of Dr. Niles, 'But what of those who already have "faith" to whom this declaration is made? Are there not those who have not consciously accepted God in Christ, but who nevertheless in some measure respond truly to God's action on them? Are these not those who, being outside the Christian faith, still do the truth? (John 3:21) The answer must be "yes".'²⁷

From this position it is but a step to a new universalism of all religions and faiths—a veritable universalistic syncretism of Christianity with other ethnic faiths.²⁸ A leading journalist has pictured it recently as follows:

Although religious conflicts still divide some countries, emphasis in recent years has turned toward the many things which all religions have in common. Announcement was made in Geneva, Switzerland, in July that the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches of the world had

agreed to make their 'first official contacts' in several centuries. Two months earlier, the Roman Catholic Church began conferences with the Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox Churches 'centered on unified action and the ending of competition' between churches.

This is not a new objective. Thirty-five years ago in India, Bhagavan Das, a noted Hindu scholar, traced similarities of Judeo-Christian doctrines and those of ancient Persia, Arabia and China, comparing the teachings of Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius and earlier spiritual leaders. The concept of a supreme being was dominant in virtually all. He concluded: 'So long as men and women are taught to believe that religions differ in essentials, so long will they continue to differ, quarrel, shed each other's blood. If they are led to see that all religions are one and the same—in essentials—they will also become one in heart, and feel their common humanity in loving brotherhood.'²⁹

Here then this particular sense of the mission of the church comes to full universalistic syncretistic flower. Here there is no necessity to challenge men to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ from the city of destruction. Here there is no 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' Here there is no wishing oneself accused for his kinsmen's sake because they are lost! Instead here is the overflowing spirit of a love and ser-

26 Cf. R. Pierce Beaver, *Envoys of Peace: the peace witness in the Christian world mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 58f.

27 Niles, *Upon the Earth*, p. 238.

28 In addition to ethnic faiths being involved, even animism may be brought into the picture. An example of this is the declaration from the Consultation on the Evangelization of West Africa Today held in Yaounde, June 23 to 30, 1965.

29 David A. Lawrence, a quotation taken from *The New York Herald Tribune*, 'Unifying Force', in the *Readers' Digest*, Oct 1965, p. 19.

vice which looks to dialogue with the faiths and practices of the world with a view to introducing them to that which they already are by the grace of God and which they will be whether they accept it or not in this life!

To those who say, 'But without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins,' the benign reply can now be given, 'True, but who of us can perceive how God in his infinitude will so apply the provision to all?' The issue of the new universalism is no longer 'God hath spoken' but 'Man hath reasoned'.

I am convinced that inherently such a concept of mission is the path to a new universalism when followed to its logical conclusion. For those who believe in the ultimate salvation of all men, acts of 'mission' will be performed in terms of the corporate situation rather than of the individual. Acts of 'mission' may then lead to involvement in political situations where the call to revolution and civil disobedience becomes the gospel of the hour. A strange, perhaps even unpremeditated, alliance may exist in this to the spirit of political, sociological and economic turbulence now apparent in other areas. On the highest level, the very essence of the question mark in the necessity for personal evangelism will render ineffective, if not destroy, the urgency to preach the gospel. The Pauline 'Woe is me' (and especially the sense of 'woe') becomes a useless and outworn appendage in the emotional and evangelism thrust of the church and mission body.

No wonder that in the light of all this the call to the harvest fields in so many quarters is but a glimmering light, that volunteers are dwindling away, that the sense of evangelism in the Great

Commission is no longer one of urgency.

III. The Church's Worldwide Mission

To establish further the 'mission of the church' today in the light of the onslaughts of neo-universalism, I suggest four things are necessary:

Inspiration of Scripture

First, we must reaffirm and relevantly define our belief in the inspiration of Scripture. I have referred to this before. This will also be developed more fully by others in this Congress. Nevertheless, we need again and again to remind ourselves that we must take the Holy Scriptures to be the utterance of God, given to us in the form of the utterance of men.

The Scriptures are inspired in the sense that is certainly implied by 2 Timothy 3:16—breathed out from God through their human authors. It is therefore not merely a record of revelation, but it is revelation itself—the present address of God to us, no less than it was a present address of God to the first recipients of the various biblical documents. It is what God is saying to each reader in this twentieth century, no less than it is what God said to the first writers and readers of the biblical documents centuries ago. For anyone so accepting the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, inspired verbally in the autographs, certain things stated in the Bible will come through with renewed force.

Exegetical Basis

Second, we must continue and

broaden our exegetical study of Scripture relating to eternal punishment and the call to redemption and reconciliation. The Wesleyan Theological Society should be a rallying point for biblical scholars to give special attention to this area so as to produce up-to-date studies and literature presenting in depth the biblical exegesis on eternal punishment, hell, the lake of fire, and other similar concepts as well as the truths of grace, mercy, redemption and reconciliation.

This is not to suggest that we are without help here. Works are available, presenting in some detail not only a historical sketch of views on eternal punishment, but also excellent summaries of Old and New Testament teaching thereon.³⁰ Nevertheless, what we need is a wider or tangential presentation of the subject under consideration here which will encompass a study in depth of John 12:32 or similar key passages. Such a study could be similar to the in-depth study by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones of John 17.

Preaching of Divine Judgement

Third, we will have a renewal in our preaching and our teaching of the testimony of the Bible that it is painfully clear from the Scriptures that bad news is fundamental to good news. More than that, we will with renewed vigour stress the awful reality of eternal loss through sin and unbelief for those who are found out of Christ at the

cessation of this life. We will reckon with the fact that condemnation rests upon all unbelievers. The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, Bethsaida and Chorazin, will become vividly real. The finger of God in the '*Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin*' will be evident in our concern for our fellow man. The vivid imagery of our Lord, as reported in the Gospels is seen especially in the impact of Matthew 25, will never be out of our consciousness. The story of the rich-man, Dives, and the poor-man, Lazarus, will speak for the immeasurable and uncrossable gulf there is for the lost. We shall begin where the apostle Paul began at Athens in Acts 17, and again where he begins in Romans chapters 1 and 2. We shall speak of the reality of divine judgment and divine retribution, punishment of sin and unbelief eternally. On that basis we shall take very seriously the reality of hell and the lake of fire.

Despite the grotesque terminology of several decades ago, from which so many of us have understandably revolted; despite the fact that the very biblical vocabulary of hell has been cheapened—such terms as, hell, wrath, eternal punishment, weeping and gnashing of teeth, the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched; despite the fact that these phrases have been bandied about so irreverently and tarnished that they are now hard for a Christian believer to use and grasp with the full sense of moral and spiritual horror which they connote when used in the scriptural sense; we must learn to take the reality of hell seriously, for we cannot take seriously the universalist alternative to it.

At that, some present-day univer-

³⁰ An excellent work is Harry Buis, *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957).

salists in their own way recognize hell. Some develop theories as a sort of bluff, not letting their hearers in on the fact that it is not so serious after all.³¹ Others come right out and speak of it only as a purgatorial and expiatory experience for a longer or shorter time, a means of grace on the path to God's final reconciling action. We on the other hand must ask God to make us serious about a grim reality, recognizing as we do from Scripture its eternity.

But we may well ask, 'How shall we preach hell?' Here the wise evangelical will be careful to preach hell ethically. This will be to emphasize not merely the physical horror of the biblical imagery, but also the moral horror of that state of remorse in which one knows God's displeasure with a vividness of an eternal choice made—the realization of a soul that he is where he is because he refused to know God's will in this world. He is where he is because his own choice has brought him there.³² Our preaching of hell will be in the terms of John 3:19: 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' John 3:18 will ring sharp and clear: 'He that believeth not is condemned already.' No one can question the justice of giving a man what he has chosen. No one can deny that God in

pouring out judgment on such a man is respecting his own image in man and thus respecting man's free responsible choice. This is man having the darkness for which he has opted.³³

Committed to the Harvest

Fourth, we must acknowledge again that the mission of the church is the proclamation of a harvest. The words of our Lord come incisively down two millenniums: 'The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest' (Luke 10:2). Such a commission will come in the face of the same statistical dimension of the harvest which may have created the neo-universalist. It will be heard with the same cry for freedom on all hands. It will be seen in a day of unprecedented tools in hand for proclamation. Such a commission will be felt against the backdrop of limited resources to complete the harvest, resources limited because no one is burdened to listen, limited because of a debased theology, limited in the face of the revitalization of faiths and cults, limited by the forces of anti-Christ.

Such a commission will speak not only of the 'dimensions of the harvest', and of the 'dilemma of the harvest', but also of the 'demand of the harvest'. The incisive imperative—you pray!—will come through with the ringing tones of a commanding Christ.

Let us therefore acknowledge that to us today as leaders in the Lord's

31 Cf. Robinson, *In the End God...* Chapter Nine, 'All In All.' Note particularly pp. 117-123.

32 This interpretation of 'choice' is held by practically all shades of evangelical thought today. It is interesting to note that it was stressed by J. I. Packer in the Payton Lecture Series referred to in footnote No 3 above.

33 Cf. J. A. Motyer, 'The Final State: Heaven and Hell,' Chapter 43 in Carl F. H. Henry, (ed.) *Basic Christian Doctrine* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962).

church comes fresh and new the prophetic commission of our Lord in Matthew 28:19 and 20, and that we hear it anew as the prophetic word in Ezekiel 3:17-19.

The Lord said to his prophet: Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

The Gospel of Salvation

Let us see it positively. The mission of

the church involves a concern for the poor, the sick, the needy, the oppressed, the problem of human relations, all of this in the context of the message that without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins, that with the application of the blood of Christ through faith in him, lost humanity can be restored to the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The mission of the church is to proclaim powerfully the fact of sin, divine wrath, judgment and hell, so as to pave the way for powerful proclamation of the grace of God through Jesus Christ that saves men from eternal punishment to everlasting life. This is the grace of a Saviour who delivers men from this evil as well as from all evil (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9-10).

Let the mission of the church be the proclamation of the dark side of the story so as to proclaim with power the gospel of deliverance.

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A Biblical-Theological Response to the Problem of Theodicy in the Context of the Modern Criticism of Religion

Rolf Hille

KEYWORDS: *Evil, dualism, theism, Enlightenment, literature, creation, fall, suffering, Christology.*

WHEN Eugen Gerstenmaier, former president of the German parliament, theologian, and passionate wild game hunter returned to Bonn, Konrad Adenauer, former German chancellor, asked him, 'Where have you been this time?' The reply: 'In Africa'. 'And what did you do there?' The answer: 'Hunted lions'. 'How many did you take down?' 'None', to which Adenauer responded: 'Well, that's quite a lot for lions.' In a similar way, one could ask me: 'What are you working on?' The answer: 'On the problem of theodicy'. 'How many answers have you found so far?' The answer: 'None'. Then, 'Well, that's a lot for theodicy.'¹

Certain problems are apparently of such a nature that fewer definitive answers are expected for them, but, rather, they have the function of holding open a fundamental and irrefutable question. In these contexts, then, it is quite a lot if one doesn't simply settle for the existent status quo of the reality, but, rather, has become more deeply aware of the problem, which the self-contradiction of human life includes in itself *coram deo* (before God).

One can state the problem or, that is, frame the question of justifying God, intensifying it in different ways, such as: 'How can a good and just God allow suffering in the world?', or on a different turn, 'Why do evil people prosper?' The critical point in each lies in the empirically obvious disparity of morality, on the one hand, and the experience of fortune or misfortune, on the other hand. The imbalance shown can,

1 Related by Odo Marquard in Willi Oelmüller (ed.), *Theodizee-Gott vor Gericht?* (Munich, 1990), p. 102 (a loose translation from the German).

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of course, also be interpreted as an anthropodicy if, in the context of relating human activity and one's resultant condition, the connection to God is negated. But, the problem of theodicy gets its full weight, historically as well as systematically, in pointing to those attributes which are associated with God in the Jewish-Christian tradition and which are apparently not compatible with reality as it is experienced.

The criticism of religion, then, which began in Europe with the Enlightenment era produced a wide spectrum of very different bases for atheism. One was denial of God in the name of the autonomy of reason, or the empirical sciences. Then there was atheism which appeals to psychology or political-economic emancipation. Yet even until the present, no form of the denial of God has worked as effectively as the insoluble conflict between God's goodness and omnipotence, on the one hand, and the evils of the world, on the other hand. Man's complaint against God's seeming failure in the world has been taken up before the forum of critical reason in philosophy and literature under the topic 'theodicy' since Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz' work, *'Essai de theodicee sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal'*, published in Amsterdam in 1710. His work closes the case for modern man to a large extent with the acquittal of the accused, on account of his supposed non-existence. Thus, in his work, *'Angeklagt Gott (God on Trial)'*, published in 1997, Bernhard Gesang comes to the following conclusion: 'The complaint lodged against God is proven to be baseless in the truest sense of the word, as there is every indication that the accused has been

absent during our entire trial proceedings.²

With this, then, the question of theodicy necessarily flows into 'anthropodicy', a matter which is taken up just as passionately and intensely as theodicy, and has the same poor prospects of a satisfactory resolution. Yet, because man is proven to be of a hopelessly religious nature, problem of theodicy, which has supposedly been overcome, arises again and again despite modernity's inherent tendency to atheism. In a pointed turn on the phrase about the future of boxing champions: 'They never come back', one must say, then, in view of the theodicy question, 'They ever come back'.

Human Existence as the 'Cry' in the Face of Evil

The problem of theodicy is sparked like a terrible thunderstorm by the continuing collision of human longing for happiness, on the one hand, with the reality of evil in the world, on the other hand. It is articulated in a very basic manner in the cry of man before God and against God.

The Norwegian artist Edvard Munch gave clear expression to this primeval anthropological moment in his painting 'The Cry': a young woman is standing on a bridge on a sunny day and some pedestrians are leisurely walking around close by her. All in all, it would be a harmonic world of colours and light if it weren't for this very deep cry which tears into the picture with

2 Bernhard Gesang, *Angeklagt Gott*, 1997, p. 180 (a loose translation from the German).

sheer horror. The oversized disfigured face of the young woman develops into one single cry which dominates the entire scene, the cause of which remains hidden from the observer and possibly even from the affected herself.

As perplexingly distant and undefined as the cry seems in this radical threat to the individual, it confronts us concretely as a cry which rings throughout world history. The slaves of the Egyptian pharaohs uttered it, as did the peoples who were laid low by the chariots of the Assyrians. One hears this cry in the Medieval torture chambers as well as in the concentration camps of Auschwitz and from the victims of Hiroshima. In view of the cry which resounds throughout history, the present generation is simply left with the feeling of having just barely escaped and survived.

Yet, the cry so impressively depicted by Munch is becoming increasingly ominous in that it prevails all over the world today. Our society, which is globally networked by the media, is constantly confronted with it in natural disasters, accidents, wars, and deportations. In this way, there arises a highly problematic apathy towards suffering. Personal indifference seems to be the way of escaping from the massive amount of suffering portrayed in the media. Of course, the cry cannot be avoided if we encounter it in direct interpersonal communication and it either forces itself on us as the suffering of our neighbour or as suffering affecting us personally, piercing our own heart.

As long as the cry is articulated and not muffled out of despair or apathy, the question arises concerning the reason for evil. As soon as this cry is expe-

rienced as an existential crisis, it provokes the question of meaning. Both ways of looking at the problem lie at the heart of the question of theodicy. Thus the forms which evil takes concretely in the world overlap one another in daily life, but they must also be examined and carefully distinguished philosophically.

Classical philosophy has defined evil in a threefold form: first as physical pain and emotional hurt, then as suffering from wickedness, that is as moral evil, and, finally, as the all-compassing event of the radical finality of all existence, that is, as metaphysical evil. In Munch's painting, it is not simply the artistic openness and the frightening, undefined nature of the cry that makes one uneasy. In its deepest dimension, the cry cannot be limited or controlled by being defined in philosophical terms.

The Cause of Evil in Western Tradition

In western philosophical tradition there are two quite different understandings of the origin of evil: the one is the Greek idealistic weakening of the power of evil by reason of metaphysical-ontological dualism; the other is the Jewish-Christian radicalizing of moral evil in the theological tension between divine holiness and human sin, or, the omnipotence of God and human freedom.

Greek idealism sees the essential cause of all evil in material reality. On the basis of a theoretical system of dualism of soul and spirit, on the one hand, and body, on the other hand, Greek philosophy, influenced by Pla-

tonism, presumes that good befits the intellectual being in the real sense, while the material world is bad in and of itself. The soul is bound in the prison of the body and is freed only by death, that is, by the decay of the body. Materialism is, then, not only the sickness that leads to death physically, but, even more so, metaphysically, in that in it and through it all the bad in life and in the world arises and becomes active.

Because being, according to Plato and especially according to Plotinus, is structured in a hierarchy, the world of ideas possesses a qualitatively high degree of being, while the material world suffers from a lack of being. Evil (the bad) can thus be described as a *privatio boni* (a lack or deficiency of the good); it has no independent reality of its own. Evil is thus defeated morally through contempt for the physical, i.e., through asceticism and apathy, and, in some instances, through a libertinism which disregards the body. Metaphysical evil is thereby ultimately overcome when the soul or the spirit itself has a part in the ideas because participation (*methexis*) in the divine makes the soul immortal as an indivisible entity of being. In terms of ideas, the philosophical approach of idealism manifests a great number of parallels to the Buddhist understanding of the world and its way of religious, psychological self-redemption.

In fundamental contradiction to this philosophical concept is the Judaeo-Christian tradition of the explanation for evil, which argues primarily in a theological way. It sees the dualism of good and evil not ontologically, because creation, as material reality, is originally and essentially good. The contrast, however, is more of a theo-

logical nature because evil stands in the form of the Satanic and the sinful in absolute opposition to the holy and just God. The roots of evil lie thus in the 'moral'; physical and metaphysical evil grows, then, out of the morally evil.

In order to understand the mystery of evil, personal and not ontological categories are therefore needed. What is the relationship of anthropological freedom to the sin of man? And how should one relate theologically the omnipotence and providence of God to the self-responsibility of man? Evil is understood as the proud rebellion of the creature against his Creator. Because of man's sinful rebellion, God has put not only man but also the entire natural order under a state of curse and decay. Creation, which was very good, has become the fallen world (Gen. 3).

Overcoming evil, and therefore the plan of salvation, must then also begin with overcoming sin in order to bring God and man into renewed personal fellowship. Salvation cannot come from the intellectual or moral capacity of man because man is totally corrupted by sin. Salvation is rather an external act of the grace of God which has come to man through Christ. This is the reason why for Christian theology the problem of theodicy, whether in the ancient or the modern understanding of it, is not a question of the acquittal of God before the tribunal of human reason, but, according to basic biblical teaching, the theological problem of the justification of the sinner *coram deo* (before God).

Theodicy in the Course of a Syllogistic Process and Philosophical Speculation

Philosophically, the problem of theodicy first becomes pressing when the idea of a personal God who, by definition, embodies absolute good, must be reconciled rationally with the evils of the world we find ourselves in.

The first precise statement of the problem of theodicy is found in the writings of Epicurus, who presents specific premises and conclusions in syllogistic variants.

God either wants to do away with evil and cannot, or, he can and does not want to, or he cannot and does not want to, or he can and wants to do so. So, if he wants to and cannot, he is then weak, which is not true of God. If he can and does not want to, then he is mean, which is also alien to God. If he does not want to and cannot, then he is weak as well as mean and is therefore not God. Yet, if he wants to and can, which alone is fitting for God, where then, does evil come from and why does he not take it away?³

The existential cry of the sufferer has simply developed into the logical problem of the philosophy of religion.

With the 18th century European Enlightenment, the conflict over the righteousness of God sharpened through the complete emancipation of philosophy from theology, or, reason becoming autonomous from revela-

tion's claim to authority. It is not surprising that, with the changes brought about by the Enlightenment, the topic of theodicy gained increasingly explosive force in the context of the criticism of religions. For western Christendom at the time of the Reformation, the question of the justification of man before God had become the central challenge, but the tables of the court proceedings are now turned with God being charged before the judgment seat of reason.

At first, though, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz approaches the topic in his work on theodicy from the viewpoint of the 'pious Enlightenment' prevalent in Germany. That is, on the rational basis of the critical case against God, Leibniz tries to decide in God's favour. Leibniz' understanding of theodicy is based on the conviction that two true statements cannot contradict one another. Scientific knowledge and philosophical insights are, as truth, compatible with the revelatory truths of Christianity. Therefore God's foreknowledge could be in just as much agreement with the spontaneous, yet not arbitrary freedom of man as the fact of the creation of the world is in relation to the ills of the world. For this our world would not exist as the best of all possible worlds if God had not created any world at all. God intended the good and only permitted evil.

The fact is worth mentioning that, in view of the further discussion of the problem in the 18th and 19th centuries which used Leibniz as a starting point, the problem of theodicy is even treated by Leibniz himself from two contrasting positional perspectives: namely, first of all, as criticism of the traditional theistic question: '*Etsi deus est,*

3 Epicurus, *Overcoming Fear*, (quoted and translated freely from the German translation, *Von der Ueberwindung der Furcht*, Zurich, 1949, p. 80).

unde malum?' (If God exists, where does evil come from?), and then also as atheism's query: '*Etsi deus non est, unde bonum?*' (If God does not exist, where does the good come from?) This latter aspect, which is essential to the matter at hand, was largely replaced in later philosophical discussion by the momentum of the critical approach to religion.

While Voltaire only satirically ridiculed the line of argument posited by Leibniz, Immanuel Kant took Leibniz' position seriously in his work 'Concerning the Failure of All Philosophical Attempts to Solve the Theodicy Problem' (*Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizee*). However, he came to the conclusion:

The outcome of this legal case before the court of reason is the following: That all previous theodicy does not achieve what it promised, namely, justifying the moral wisdom of world-government against the doubts raised against it from that which experience in this world allows one to know.⁴

In his work *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, Bertrand Russell points out importantly that, in view of his attempt at the theodicy question, Leibniz had fallen into a self-contradiction between his own logic, on the one hand, and his metaphysical presuppositions, on the other hand.⁵

The Hegelian system presents a final solution to theodicy which has been highly effective and influential in the history of philosophy. In the dialectic self-development of the absolute spirit, God, as the dynamic principle of all reality in a universal synthesis, is the eschatological completion of the immanent process of history. Therefore, the necessary evils at work in the process of history are justified in view of the goal of the apotheosis of the world. Yet the leftist Hegelians Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx already negated the theodicy of the great idealist in their efforts to 'turn (Hegel) upside down from head to toe', and gave it up to a radical atheistic criticism of religion.

The Heightening and Intensification of the Problem of Theodicy in Modern Literature

The course which the question of theodicy has taken in the history of western philosophy and literature, however, makes one thing quite clear: the topic gains its relevance and power not so much from rational discourse on it, but rather from the very acute experience of suffering in each case. In view of its contingency, it provokes the question of the 'why' and the 'wherefore' of evil again and again in increasingly intensified form as history boldly progresses.

Since a satisfactory self-coherent answer to the question of the justice of God cannot be found in philosophy and theology (*aporia*), literary and artistic portrayals of the problem have gained in power, intensity, and influence. In

⁴ Translated freely from the German edition of Kant's Works, (Immanuel Kant, *Werke*, ed. by W. Weischedel, Darmstadt, 1983, vol. 9, A 210).

⁵ Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (London, 1900).

1713 Leibniz was still able to respond to Duke Anton Ulrich in boundless optimism: 'Nobody can imitate our Lord better than a writer of beautiful novels.'

God is the brilliant writer, and world history is his literary work. The contingency of world events arises from an artistic spirit which the human reader can understand only in part at first, yet, who, according to his brilliant idea, is necessarily beautiful.

That the novel of the world could also become a horror story instead of being beautiful is clear in the change during the Modern Age from Enlightenment optimism, especially in view of the catastrophes of the 20th century. The experiences of suffering of the modern world with its technologically-based wars of annihilation, mass escapes, and deportations as well as the mass liquidation of ideological opponents have allowed the purely intellectual quest for a philosophically-based theodicy to become an anaemic, abstract idea. So a literary solution to the problem in the form of tragedy has increasingly been pushed into the foreground.

Examples of the intensification of the problem of theodicy in literature can be given by referring to a few titles which have contributed much to the understanding of human suffering because of their striking ability to leave a deep impression on the reader: e.g., F.M. Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* with the key statement that the tears of a single innocent child are enough to 'shake the universe'.⁶ Georg Büchner's question in

Danton's Death has become a classic: 'Why do I suffer? This is the rock of atheism.'⁷ In the post-war period, Wolfgang Borchert's play *Standing Outside the Door*⁸ became extremely effective as an atheistic charge levelled at the 'storybook loving God' of theology. Finally, Albert Camus' novel *The Pest*⁹ should be included in this very brief listing as a prime example in which Dr. Rieux battles against the tendency to become accustomed to suffering and to fall into despair because of the suffering. The theological drama sparked by the outbreak of a pestilence is fought out in the dialogues between Dr. Rieux and Father Paneloux.

In fact, the literary form of the problem in poetry and prose texts not only makes it clear that the problem of theodicy has continually intensified in the Modern Age, but, also that the sensitivity of contemporary man has grown with respect to any kind of experience of suffering. Odo Marquard talks about a 'princess on the pea' syndrome in this context, i.e., in spite of a genuine reduction of suffering through modern medicine and technology, the actual and real suffering which still persists is experienced as even more difficult and more painful. With the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789, which were put into practice for the first time in the New World, i.e., in the United States of America, man

⁶ F.M. Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated freely here from the German (Munich, 8. edit., 1987), p. 330.

⁷ Georg Büchner, *Dantons Tod, Werke und Briefe*, (München 7. Ed., 1973), p. 40 (a free translation from this work).

⁸ Wolfgang Borchert, 'Draußen vor der Tür' (Reinbeck 30. Ed., 1967) (loosely translated).

⁹ Albert Camus, *The Pest* (Hamburg 1995), a loose translation from the German.

began to understand himself no more primarily in terms of his duties and obligations, but in terms of his rights. And so the 'pursuit of happiness' is declared and demanded as a self-evident human right in the American Declaration of Independence.

A Biblical-Theological Discussion of the Problem of Theodicy

Corresponding to the philosophical and literary attempts to solve the problem of theodicy, there is an effort in theology to deal with this very unwieldy topic which is similarly intensive and comprehensive. We will present now some elementary aspects of biblical theology, after which exegetical findings will be employed to attempt to find a systematic solution to the issue.

According to biblical understanding, the condition of man's relationship to God is mirrored in the physical reality of the world. The reality of original fellowship with God, as was given in the primeval condition of man, corresponds to the paradisiacal condition of the world. With the fall of man, not only his inner condition was changed but sin also created a curse-laden upheaval in the entire condition of the cosmos. The world becomes a place of trouble, pain, and death. Physical and metaphysical evil grows out of moral evil. Ethics and *physis* (nature) stand in a fundamental relationship of correspondence. With the fact of the Fall, the announcement of punishment by the Creator 'but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die' (Gen. 2:17) becomes world defin-

ing reality, which Paul later sums up in the statement: 'For the wages of sin is death ...' (Rom. 6:23).

Every theologically meaningful discussion of the problem of theodicy must start from this context. Therefore, the simple philosophical syllogisms which conclude with atheism as a logically proven fact from the failure of theodicy are too short-sighted. At first glance, the conclusion of the processes of philosophical logic seem to be compelling: God is good, but the world is bad. Therefore, God cannot be omnipotent, and so on. God is omnipotent, yet the world is bad. Therefore, God cannot be good.

In the tradition of Judaeo-Christian theism, the attributes 'good and omnipotent' are indispensable for the doctrine of God. Because they cannot be brought into harmony with the badness of the world, philosophical reason draws the conclusion of God's nonexistence. The flaw in this reasoning does not lie in the formal completion of syllogisms, but in the theologically inadequate premises. Goodness and omnipotence are indeed indispensable characteristics of God, yet, the problem of theodicy deals more essentially with the attributes of God's holiness, his wrath upon sin, and thus, his judgment of the world. From a Christian standpoint, the question of theodicy can start only from the problem of moral evil. As soon as one takes physical or metaphysical evil as the starting point, one ends up only with the inner logic of an *aporia* or atheism. The facts presented here do not in any way mean a simple theological solution to the problem, but simply a change of the context in which the entire complex of the topic must be seen.

At the beginning of the Israel's history, the revelation of the Law is central to the formation of the people in the Exodus as well as in the wilderness wandering and the possession of the land. The Torah as good instruction is, at first, a gift, then a task:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers (Psalm 1:1-3).

Life is successful when man remains in the covenant of the Law. Blessing and curse are decided by faithful obedience:

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known (Deut. 11:26-28).

Even the promise of land, as concretely full of life as it is, has the Garden of Eden in view. Israel is to be a place and a fellowship of blessing in the midst of the nations. An essential characteristic of the covenant is the unbroken connection of Israel's personal fellowship with her God and the fullness of life and joy which grows out of it. The inner holiness of this relationship to God is reflected in the successful life and external happiness,

which are at the same time a divine confirmation of the person's faith. The wisdom of the heart results in a prosperous and satisfying life:

For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path (Prov. 2:6-9).

Israel is tempted when this certainty and wisdom on life, which is based on the truth of the Torah, falls apart. Job, the righteous man of God, suffers unimaginable misery and is therefore called seriously to account by his friends. Does some deep sin lie concealed beneath his apparent piety?

Asaph asks a similar question in Psalm 73 with just a bit of a different turn. Why do the ungodly prosper?

For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.... This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning (Psalm 73:3-6, 12-14).

The absurdity of the world's situations seems to lead faith in God's jus-

tice and faithfulness to his covenant to the point of despair.

Just how deeply Israel is shaken by this irritating connection between conduct and welfare even as late as the period of the New Testament is made clear by the portrayal of the catastrophic events reported in Luke 13:1-5:

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.'

Noteworthy here is the sceptical inquiry about the guilt of the victims. Today, the emphasis would be on the charge against those responsible. Who is the architect responsible for this tower which collapsed and caused such a terrible accident? Doubtless Pilate, who had praying pilgrims cut down, is a corrupt powerful politician who really ought to be tried for war crimes. This way of dealing with guilt needs no special justification.

But, by reason of the inner logic of the connection between conduct and welfare, it must be asked why these particular ones were affected by disaster and death, even though they at first appear innocent and arbitrary victims of an accident.

Moreover, in characteristic fashion,

the question of guilt (sin) is even raised there in an inquisitorial sense where the individual is quite obviously incapable of any sin (guilt). This aspect is talked about in detail in the meeting between Jesus and the man born blind:

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life' (John 9:1-3).

It is clear from these biblical passages that Israel understood there to be a unswervingly valid correlation between piety and happiness in life, on the one hand, and sin and destruction, on the other hand. If this divinely ordered framework was disturbed, these kinds of events not only provoked the question of the guilt of the evildoers, but also of the victims. If the victim was incapable of guilt, then something had to be found among the parents or other relatives which was responsible for the curse on the victims.

According to the typical Old Testament understanding, if the connection between sin and suffering could not be made clear and evident, then there developed the form of the problem of theodicy which is typified in Job. Through faith and obedience (*emunah*), one held fast to the God who was faithful to the covenant. Therein, however, lay the temptation and, conversely also, the way to overcome it.

The insoluble problem for Old Testament faith is how the question of divine justice can be understood in the light of the suffering of the righteous

and the good fortune of the ungodly. Jesus takes a fundamentally different position when he says: 'I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish' (Luke 13:5). As well as this intensification of the problem of guilt, this is the answer to the problem of the man born blind, namely, the assuring promise: 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life' (John 9:3).

Paul applies a strict, systematic form of argument to Jesus' completely revolutionary way of looking at the problem. With very legal precision, the apostle makes clear in the first three chapters of Romans that both Jews and Gentiles have fallen short of God's righteousness. Therefore, every human being, without exception, stands under the curse of the Law and has been given over to the wrath of God's judgment which brings death.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ... (Rom. 3:22-23).

Even very high moral achievements are not able to destroy this connection between guilt and ultimate welfare. The classic starting point for the Old Testament question of theodicy is put into a completely new light by the absolute radicalization of sin in the New Testament, because there no longer exists a righteous person and so no innocent suffering. All the good fortune of the ungodly turns out to be a terrible deception because of the coming eternal damnation. The only thing meaningful for time and eternity is salvation in Christ which is offered to the

sinner as a free gift of grace through the preaching of the gospel. From this perspective, the demand of theodicy, i.e., the acquittal of God before the tribunal of man, is a manifestation in itself of the total godlessness of the sinner. For the sinner cannot claim any special rights before God, but, rather, is totally dependent on God's pardon and justification. The New Testament's call to repentance is ultimately about turning away from theodicy to the justification of the sinner *coram deo* (before God).

The modern demand for theodicy implies yet another question which is worthy of and in need of discussion in the context of the radicalizing and universalizing of sin. The attempt undertaken by theodicy to justify (or acquit) God *coram homine* (before man) contains the conviction, among others, that man would like and is willing to accept the rule of God over his life if God were proven to be good and omnipotent in allowing life to go well for man. According to this, then, the happy and fortunate person would be the believer who would not be tempted by atheism. Good fortune in life on this earth is, according to this understanding, the precondition for faith. Yet, this hypothesis, which is so often held, especially in the Modern Age, is already flawed by the fact that people who are outwardly happy and wealthy are in no way more open to faith than those who have to struggle with the miseries of the world and terrible situations in life.

However, this fact is not only evident from the empirical evidence, but it is also firmly anchored in the basic framework of the Bible's presentation of the history of salvation. The require-

ment of happiness as a precondition of a spontaneously positive experience of God was already given in the beginning in the Garden of Eden as the starting point for humanity. Every kind of forced theodicy thus appeared to be completely erroneous and unfounded for the pre-fall state of men. Yet, even under the conditions of the paradisaical bliss, the creature is seen to be open towards the Tempter and rebellious against his Creator. A corresponding mirror image of this is true for the eschatological vision of the millennium. The Revelation to John depicts a situation in which the conditions and effects of the Fall are limited and the Law of Christ is valid for humanity. The basis for the problem of theodicy is thus removed. Yet, even this ideal condition, which includes knowledge of all the negative historical experience of preceding human history without God, is not able to immunize man against renewed Satanic temptations, but, instead, leads to new suffering on the way to a new Fall.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.... When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather

them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore (Revelation 20:1-3, 7,8).

Overcoming disaster and thereby coping with the problem of theodicy cannot therefore begin with man's right to happiness. Instead, it must do away with the actual cause of the harm, namely, man's fallibility in principle and the fact of his sin. All remedies for external damage and the hindrances to human existence, even through special divine miraculous deeds, can have only temporary significance over against the fundamental restoration of the relationship to God.

The portrayal of the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12 is instructive in connection with this. The expectations of the sick man, as well as those of his four friends and all present, are directed in anxious excitement towards the miracle worker from Nazareth. Yet, instead of speaking the healing words: 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.', Jesus says to him: 'Son, your sins are forgiven' (v. 5). Jesus' priorities are quite obviously different from the horizon of expectations of his hearers. First, the basic cause of sin must be removed, and only then does the healing of physical handicap make any sense. The reversal of the theodicy question is likewise emphasized in this Gospel story in the question of justification before God by the forgiveness of sins. The solution of the 'question of guilt' is clearly placed before the 'question of power', as Karl Heim briefly explained in his theological work *Jesus, Culminator of the World*.¹⁰

¹⁰ Karl Heim, *Jesus der Weltvollender* (Hamburg, 3. Ed., 1952), pp. 35-52 (a loose translation from the German)

If one considers that, according to biblical understanding, *hybris* (pride) is the fatal root of sin, then because of the sovereignty of God, the demand for theodicy moves once again into a completely different light. Only the Creator is absolute in his will, and so the creature, even with his gift of reason, remains completely dependent on and in relation to him. Man cannot claim from his Creator any 'rights by nature' for happiness, but, rather, is invited to entrust himself to God's goodness and to respect therein God's lordship and affirm it in trust. Despite the anthropological privilege of being created in the image of God, the infinite difference between the Creator and the creature is firmly upheld throughout the Bible. Theodicy understood as a legal entitlement against God is *superbia* (arrogance), and is thereby the sin of *katexochen* (wilfulness, the very nature and origin of sin). It is no surprise, then, that the conflict of Eve with the serpent bears all the basic marks of an attempted theodicy. Still, on the other hand, the exalted self-revelation of God to Job, sorely confronted by the theodicy question, is not given simply as an argumentative self-justification by God, that is, as a theodicy made good on by God. Instead, it is presented as the sovereign claim to rule made by the autonomous Creator.

Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: 'Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand' (Job 38:1-4).

At the end of the dialogue is not the theodicy of God, but Job's confession of sin and his humbling before God.

Then Job replied to the LORD : 'I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, "Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?" Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, "Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me." My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes' (Job 42:1-6).

The historical-theological basis for God's autonomous freedom, which finds its expression in the free selective action of God, stands in a direct analogy to that based on the theology of Creation. The history of Israel is the permanent model and theological paradigm for this fact, which Paul briefly develops in Romans 9-11:

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' (Romans 9:14f.).

Although Israel's path is marked by divine punishments and visitations, and she cried for theodicy long before Auschwitz, the apostle emphasizes with Isaiah 1:9:

It is just as Isaiah said previously: 'Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.' (Rom. 9:29).

Even for Israel as a whole, repen-

tance not theodicy is demanded. Theodicy will take place first at the end of all of Israel's ways in history in the sense of an eschatological doxology, in the same way as a *donum super additum* (a gift beyond what might expect).

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
(Romans 11:33).

Theodicy, understood biblically, is shown as an act of grace of the God's sovereign lordship of history, which is never charged against, but is granted as a gift.

This eschatological perspective of divine grace is thus now valid beyond Israel for all of world history inasmuch as it allows itself to be brought into the covenant of God as the history of salvation for all peoples.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away' (Rev. 21:1-4).

Within this hope, the longing for theodicy becomes the motivating factor of the question: 'How much

longer?' This motivation can be seen in Job and also among the martyrs depicted in Revelation. In this sense, the question of theodicy has a positive and legitimate role in the light of the creative tension associated with the eschatological 'not yet'. By reason of the salvation which has occurred and the forgiveness of sins which has been received, faith waits for the culmination of salvation. Put in philosophical terms, after moral evil has been overcome by God's free sovereign act, the definitive ending of physical and metaphysical evil must also begin by virtue of the promise. Yet, this eschatological resolution of theodicy is not defined by man, but freely granted by God. The lasting and rationally untraceable sovereignty of God is shown in this connection, indeed, in view of the twofold judgment of the world.

Practical Theological Perspectives within the Framework of Christology

The dogmatic treatment of the theodicy question as argued above from the teaching of Scripture is foundational for the apologetic and doctrinal discussion of the topic, yet, it needs deepening at the level of practical theology. Even though he is a believer to whom redemption has been granted, the person who is suffering is still tempted and therefore should receive consolatory help in a special way.

Therefore, in conclusion, we can refer to some essential spiritual aspects of this vital topic.

First of all, the Bible takes up the cry of the person who is suffering and treats it with the utmost seriousness.

While the Bible rejects the cool distant discourse of a purely intellectual case against God by pointing to God's sovereignty and man's sin, it nevertheless opens up a clear space to the person who is pleading his case before God. Temptation is not brushed aside, complaint is not prohibited, doubt is not suppressed! Instead, the believer is invited to pour out his heart before God. It is in this speechlessness of suffering that Job, the Psalms, the Fathers, and the prophets are able to grant a person freedom to speak. The confession and insight of Asaph in Psalm 73:16f is especially worthy of our attention in this regard: 'When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.' (Psalm 73:16f.).

There are two aspects which Asaph believes have helped him to find solid ground again in view of the depths of the questions of theodicy: besides the fact that Asaph is an excellent example of an honest complainant before God, he first points to the congregation assembled for worship. The fellowship of believers and persons praying gives the one in doubt strength and support. For the *homo incurvatus in se ipsum* (man bent over inwardly into himself) the question is not just about a theoretical construct of theological anthropology, but, rather, it is about a highly relevant counselling situation and the endangerment of a person being tempted. It is because of this very crisis of faith and the unsolved question of life that this person is in danger of isolating himself and falling away from the supportive fellowship of the people of God. Asaph's experience of faith stands against this as an invitation to

celebrate the worship of God and to experience the presence of God in the assembly (church), even in spite of the seeming good fortune of the ungodly.

The other help that Asaph has received is the eschatological perspective which fundamentally relativizes the good fortune or misfortune in this world: '... and he saw their end'. Ultimately, the problem of theodicy with its apparent irregularities is not solved in a context of right conduct and the welfare that results from it. Instead, it is only the view of the end, that is, of the eschatological fate, which reveals the evidence of God's justice. The relativizing of all earthly situations and orientation on the eschatological goal of life gives one the consolation of overcoming suffering and holding onto hope, as Paul writes in Romans 8:18: 'I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.' The reason for such hope, as far as Christians are concerned, has to do with salvation history and the fact that the new Creation, beyond the evil of this world, has already begun and been set in motion with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

With the opening of the christological horizon, we have touched on the specific feature of Christian theology which is of central importance for the dealing with the question of theodicy, and which links the systematic-theological and the practical-theological aspects of the question together. Ancient Greek teaching about God started from the apathy of the blessed gods towards all human conditions. Islam means submission to the destiny required by Allah, i.e., the *kismet*. Hinduism and Buddhism seek to overcome

the thirst for life in order then to be able to enter Nirvana. An individual's right to personal welfare is negated in this. Therefore, Buddhism has neither the prerequisites nor the serious occasion for raising the question of theodicy with its intense concerns and struggles.

God's personal pledge as a declaration of love for his people and as the promise of faithfulness to his covenant is found in a unique way in the Old Testament. The necessity for raising the question of theodicy in a specific sense first emerges through the good fortune of the ungodly and the suffering of the righteous. Within an anthropological framework, the New Testament not only points to the radicalness and universality of sin, it even emphasizes first and foremost the solidarity of the Triune God with sinful, suffering man in the context of the doctrine of God. In order to understand this, we must take a careful look at the whole biblical context.

Practically nowhere else in all of Old Testament history does the threatening storm cloud of the problem of theodicy rise blacker or more powerfully than in God's command to the patriarch of faith, namely, to Abraham:

Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.' (Gen. 22:2).

Here the word of God's promise is pitted against the command of God to sacrifice Isaac; it is presented as a rationally insoluble mystery which is as unfathomable as the problem of theodicy. In the end, God himself

solves the conflict with the promise:

'I swear by myself', declares the LORD, 'that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.' (Gen. 22:16f.).

This sparing of one's only beloved son is taken up by Paul in his theological summary of salvation in Christ:

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (Rom. 8:32).

God remains as sovereign Creator and Lord of history, who is not apathetic to the world and to man; he is also not simply a transcendent power of destiny to whom one must submit, and nor is he is an impersonal sphere of all being in the sense of pantheism, in which the individual, forgetting joy and suffering, is lost to himself. Rather, he is the loving father who offers himself in the Son. God in Christ is a sympathetic God who suffers along with us. He bears our pains, suffers our sickness, and dies our death. In Christ, the question of theodicy arises between the Father and the Son as the inner tension within the Trinity:

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*'—which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsak-

en me?' (Mk. 15:34).

In the resurrection of the righteous one who dies in place of the sinner and who makes the ungodly righteous, the theodicy between the Father and Son is finally completed. God in Christ is, in terms of dogma and in terms of counseling, the only possible answer to theodicy. *Crux probat omnia* (the cross proves everything). In it, the Christian, as a disciple of Jesus, participates in his cross and lives in the power of his resurrection. Christian faith stands against the temptation and doubt

active in this world with the prayer and certainty of Paul Gerhardt, who penned the following hymn:

Lord, be my consolation; shield me
when I must die;
remind me of thy passion when my
last hour draws nigh.

These eyes, new faith receiving,
from thee shall never move;
for he who dies believing dies safely
in thy love.

('O Sacred Head, Now Wounded'—
fourth stanza).

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Pete Ward is a lecturer in Youth Ministry.

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Using our minds in mission, ministry and service

Allison M. Howell

KEYWORDS: *Mind, understanding, discernment, mission, ministry, culture*

THE British sociologist and theologian, Os Guinness, once spoke at a seminar in California where a very attractive woman introduced his session. She began her introduction by asking him, 'How's your body?' After a stunned silence, all he could reply was, 'Madam, I'm English. How's your mind?'¹ Guinness' response does not necessarily depict a distinction between national characteristics, but is illustrative of a deeper problem that has infected modern society like a cancer, where appearance, a pleasurable image, celebrity status, power and possessions have much greater value than the state of a person's inner life and the use of the mind in pursuit of intellec-

tual formation and excellence. Even in Ghana, television advertisements for beverages, hair products, computers and other goods, seem to reinforce the notion that the exterior image is all that matters for a successful person.

What is of greater concern, however, is the evidence that this attitude has not only penetrated into the lives of many Christians, but has been characterised by an anti-intellectualism that emerged in evangelical circles around the beginning of the 19th century. The result in our time is that many evangelicals are shallow in their thinking and do not know how their faith relates to the use of their minds. J. P. Moreland argues that 'The contemporary Christian mind is starved, and as a result we have small impoverished souls.'² In much of the western world, Christ has been taken out of the public sphere,

1 Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals don't think and what to do about it* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1995), p. 9.

2 J.P. Moreland, *Love your God with all your mind: the role of reason in the life of the soul* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), p. 80.

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thus enhancing the perception amongst many non-Christians that a thinking mind is incompatible with Christianity.

Even more alarming is Moreland's contention that the evangelical failure to understand the relationship of faith to reason, and the separation of the secular and the sacred in the West have combined to weaken world missions, produced an irrelevant gospel and rendered Christian witness ineffective.³ This is not to deny that there have been individual western and non-western Christians who have used their minds to the glory of God in both mission and ministry throughout the past century. In his book, *Translating the message: the missionary impact on culture*, Lamin Sanneh's tribute to Bible translators who produced 'translations of excellence'⁴ is evidence of their commitment to a godly use of their thinking mind. However, the concerns of both Guinness and Moreland are real. There is an increasing danger of many Christians being sucked into a chasm filled with mind-numbing activities that indicate a preference to be 'entertained', to while away hours in computer games and avoid whatever requires serious study and a sacrificial long-term commitment to learning that can be applied to the real world.

My own interest in the way Christians use their minds was ignited by the comment of a colleague in Geography who, upon hearing that I wanted to study theology, declared it 'the waste

of a good mind'. In addition, the magnetism of the words, 'the mind of Christ' (1 Cor. 2:16), kindled in me the desire to understand what Scripture says about our minds and the way we use them.

The purpose of this paper is not to examine the reasons for the ineffective use of the mind amongst evangelicals as this has been well addressed in the writings of authors such as Os Guinness and J. P. Moreland. The aim of this paper is rather to reflect on some aspects of what Scripture has to say about the Christian mind and to consider its implications for Christian mission, ministry and service.

1. The understanding, feeling and desiring mind

There are a number of ways in which the mind is portrayed in the New Testament. The first is through the Greek word *dianoia* which expresses the mind as a faculty of understanding, feeling and desiring. The ultimate desire that a person can have is shown in Mark 12:30 in Jesus' answer to the scribe: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'⁵

Spoken in the context of a conversation with the Sadducees, these words show us how Jesus used his own mind. Because he had learnt and understood the position of those who questioned him, he was able powerfully and intelligently to refute their

3 J.P. Moreland, *Love your God*, pp. 30, 31.

4 Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the message: the missionary impact on culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), p. 179.

5 All references are taken from *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1989).

arguments. Jesus' response to the scribe who questioned him about the greatest commandment, reveals the ultimate purpose for life. Contained within this profound statement is the declaration that the mind, that core of understanding, feeling and desiring, belongs to the Lord. To love God involves a total commitment of our minds.

The same Greek word *dianoia* is used in 1 Peter 1:13-15 where Peter writes about suffering, trials and salvation. Thus he states:

Therefore prepare your *minds* for action, discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct. (Emphasis mine)

In these two passages, the mind provides the link between our love (the whole area of our desires) and our conduct. We cannot divorce our mind from our behaviour. As Christians, our faculty for understanding, feeling and desiring, needs to be prepared for action. Moreland points out that 'If we are to love God with the mind, then the mind must be exercised regularly, trained to acquire certain habits of thought, and filled with an increasing rich set of distinctions and categories.'⁶ Therefore, to be holy in our conduct, we need to prepare our minds, that is, our inner life for action and

right conduct.⁷ Otherwise, we are constantly hampered in our response to issues and problems to remain on a superficially emotive level that reveals little rational reasoning or thinking.

In a world where distractions, noise and fatigue dissipate our energy, we should hardly be surprised that often we are caught completely unprepared for the tasks that require us to use our minds. Our minds are distracted from a wholehearted love for God. The 24-hour news services clutter TV screens with multiple ticker-tape messages that dance across the screen below a news reader with a constant re-cycling of the same images. This panders to a growing addiction that says, 'I have to know everything that is going on all the time,' and so TV screens are constantly churning out news in offices and homes. However, whatever the knowledge that is gained, it is of superficial value and the Christian viewer cannot even focus a 'Christian mind' on the task in hand. It is little wonder then that people scarcely withdraw from their 'multi-tasking' into the silence and quietness that should enable them to attentively hear the voice of God, commune with him and love him with all their minds.

Tragically, therefore, we often do not think before we act. We react to situations on the basis of assumptions or feelings that do not reflect an adequate understanding of the situations. Often

⁷ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976), p. 967.

⁶ J.P. Moreland, *Love your God*, p. 104.

I speak before I think and this has got me frequently into trouble with various people. Somebody asked me recently, 'What's the most difficult thing about being in Ghana?' Upon careful reflection, I realized that it is the same difficulty that I have in Australia or any other part of the world—what I say and how I relate to people in my relationships. I seem to be in a constant struggle in these two areas. To love God with the totality of our being (including our minds) lies at the very core of mission, ministry and service to God.

2. The calm, impartial and discerning mind

Another Greek word used for the mind in the New Testament is *nous*, and it carries the meaning of the mind as the faculty to perceive, judge, or discern calmly and impartially. Paul writes in Romans 12:2, 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.' In other words, the mind is the key to an ongoing transformation in our lives. It is the place of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we respond to his leading through the word of God and prayer.

We need to learn to have our minds renewed for the purpose of calm and impartial discernment which in turn will contribute to our transformation. We need to be able to perceive, discern and judge with the mind of Christ so that we recognize what is right and good as well as what is wrong and evil. We also need to be able to withhold judgement sometimes when we do not

understand what is happening around us. That, too, is discernment. It is very easy to go into a new situation and condemn it as syncretistic, demonic and not right before God, because we feel uncomfortable with what we have seen or heard, when in reality we may not have even understood the situation.

Many years ago in Northern Ghana, a young western woman accompanied a group of us to a Christian funeral in a traditional house. The Church leaders with whom we worked had, over time, thought through their response to traditional funerals. They used Scripture to affirm those elements within the traditional funeral practices that Scripture agreed with, and to change whatever needed to be cleansed or purified. These northern Christians had developed a funeral liturgical celebration which is not only very distinctive but also related to their context.

As we sat on the ground in the courtyard of the house, there was incredible noise swirling around us from the drumming and dancing. I noticed that the young western woman sitting on the ground beside me had turned suddenly pale, as if she was about to have a heart attack, and I asked her if she was all right. She said to me, 'This is demonic!' She had been in Ghana only three weeks but she had already classified what Christians were doing as demonic because it did not fit her own expectations of a Christian funeral where there usually would be quiet organ music and individual activities following in sequence. Furthermore, she did not even have a clue as to the spiritual journey Christians in northern Ghana had made to reach that point. She was not able to recognize the scriptural input in the funeral

because her mind could not discern the transformation that had taken place in the minds and understanding of these northern Christians who were applying the mind of Christ to their specific context.

Paul uses the word *nous* again in 1 Corinthians 2:16 where he writes, 'For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have mind of Christ.' We cannot and do not know the mind of the all-knowing God, yet we have the mind of Christ! How is this possible? It is possible because God's Spirit gives us a calm mind to discern and to judge. In Ephesians 4:17-18, Paul writes, 'Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live in the futility of their minds [*nous*]. They are darkened in their understanding [*dianoia*], alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart.'

Paul indicates that where this faculty to perceive, judge, or discern calmly and impartially (*nous*) is defective, it can be traced back to a defective faculty of understanding, feeling and desiring (*dianoia*). Furthermore, the failure of a person to love God with the totality of their being stems from a problem in the core of their being, their heart.⁸ Paul reminds the Ephesians (4:23) that they are 'to be renewed in the spirit of your minds'. It is only that discerning, calm mind of Christ that enables us to break with our corrupt and deluded former ways of life. The corrupt mind needs to be constantly renewed.

In the context of our Christian mission and in ministry, the development of a Christian mind, that faculty to perceive, judge, or discern calmly and impartially, lies at the very core of discipleship. If it is not within us, then how can we claim to be disciples of Christ, that is, those who have understood and know the mind of our Master? How then can we disciple others to be renewed in their minds?

3. The wise mind that does not think highly of itself

A third word (*phroneo*) used for the mind in the New Testament, has to do with the acknowledgement of one's status. It depicts the mind as the virtue of wisdom and right self-knowledge where one thinks modestly and not highly of oneself. Paul uses this word in Philippians 2:5 where he says, 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself...' This attitude or mind is in such stark contrast to that mind that emphasizes power, high status, external image and a well-being devoid of suffering that has, unfortunately, permeated through today's church. Jesus rebuked Peter for not setting his mind (*phroneo*) on God's interests (Mark 8:33). Peter, like many of us, could not cope with the image of a suffering leader. Yet we are to have the mind of Christ and to think wisely and modestly of ourselves. Paul repeats this message concerning the need for Christians to have a mind that thinks modestly about oneself (Rom. 12:3, 16).

⁸ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 966.

This type of mind aims at unity with fellow believers in Christ. All too frequently in the context of mission and ministry, an unhealthy individualism undermines the sense of community and the corporate search for the mind of Christ in any new venture. Speaking at a missions conference in Australia, Oscar Muriu, a Kenyan church leader, encouraged western missions and missionaries who are considering ministry in another society or cultural group to always ask the question, 'What is the Father uniquely doing in this society?'⁹ To sincerely ask that question and then search for the answer requires a committed attitude of humility and willingness to learn. We need to be prepared to let go of what we may regard as our privileged and rightful position and open our minds to welcome and embrace new perspectives on God's truth.

4. Grasping God's perspective with your mind and making it your own

On the surface, the story of Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10:1-35) appears to have little to do with the mind, but it gives us insight into the way we use our minds for mission, ministry and service in any context. When Peter went to the Gentile centurion in Caesarea, he admitted to Cornelius and those gathered with him in his house that he had gained a new perspective on God's truth: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation

anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him' (vv. 34, 35). The Greek word used for 'understand' is *katalambano* which means, to take hold of something with your mind and to take it into yourself. Here was Peter, a Jew, in the house of a Gentile, making a statement that indicated that something profound had occurred in his mind. What happened to Peter? To answer the question, we have to return to the beginning of the story.

When Peter saw the vision of the unclean animals and heard God's instructions related to eating food, it burned a new truth into his mind with a searing passion that contradicted his previous tradition. Because Peter's mind was open to the Spirit of God, he was enabled to understand that God was not just speaking about food that had been previously taboo to him. God was actually addressing his attitude to Gentiles. Peter's mind was able to grasp God's perspective and make it his own. When he left for Caesarea he had not known why he was going, for when Peter arrived at Cornelius' house, he asked him, 'Now may I ask why you sent for me?' Peter took a step of faith in his mind. In our going into mission, God provides us with the opportunity to understand his perspective and make it our own. But how do we use our mind to learn God's perspective?

At a Workshop on Gospel and Culture,¹⁰ Kwame Bediako highlighted

⁹ Oscar Muriu, Missions Conference, West Pennant Hills Community Church, Australia, 15 May, 1999.

¹⁰ Kwame Bediako highlighted the three points in a talk entitled 'Theology as Christian response to culturally-rooted questions', Gospel and Culture Workshop 5, 11 May, 2001. I have related these three points to the use of our minds rather than specifically to gospel and culture issues.

three points in the story of Cornelius and Peter which illustrate the steep 'learning curve' that Peter went through to understand God's perspective on mission.

God takes the initiative in ministry and mission

The first point the story shows us is that it is God who takes the initiative in mission. Furthermore, God begins that initiative on the unbeliever's side. Peter did not sit in Joppa planning an outreach programme to Caesarea. Certainly he was praying but he was also thinking about food. Prior to Peter having the vision during his midday prayer session and his questioning God about its meaning, God had already taken the initiative in the life of Cornelius, a Gentile man, and we are led to believe that many of his household had also been moved by God. God was present in Caesarea. The Lord Jesus Christ was there. God had prepared Cornelius for this encounter. There was something going on in Cornelius' mind and heart. There was a desire that God had placed there when Cornelius used his mind and his heart to pray, and to give alms. The action did not start when Peter entered the home of Cornelius. In the story told in Acts 10, there is a very strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God and on the initiative of God.

When we think about our involvement in any form of mission or ministry, we will realise that God is always ahead of us. He has always gone before us. Therefore, we have a responsibility to use our minds to learn about what God is doing. We have a responsibility to respond to the word from God saying, 'Come'. We also have the responsibility

to come without dominating those to whom God directs us. We are to come and serve and hear about what God is doing. God uses our knowledge, our learning, and above all, our willingness to hear him and to hear him through those with whom we work. We do not accomplish God's tasks simply through our training, expertise or techniques.

God loves all people

The second point that profoundly affects our minds as shown in Acts 10 is that God loves all peoples whether they know him or not. We are raised by our families within a particular setting and we are culturally and mentally conditioned to have a certain attitude towards people who are different from us. That is the way Peter was brought up; in the story he finds himself in a situation where he discovers that God loves the Gentiles as much as God loves him. We need to keep this foremost in our minds, especially when the negative comments about other people begin to arise, whether they follow Islam or the New Age Movement or are simply our neighbours whose lifestyle revolves around their leisure activities.

A revision of our self-understanding

The third point is that our engagement in mission and ministry with God will lead to a significant revision of our own self-understanding. In Acts 10, this engagement took place not just in the physical meeting of two men from different cultures, but it took place in their mind. This is what happened to Peter. The engagement led Peter to revise his previous self-understanding

and his grasp of the ways of God. The vision he had on the rooftop in Joppa, related to things that traditionally he had been taught to believe he should not eat. In his mind he had believed that, 'This is God's way'. All of a sudden, he faced a new situation where he had to revise his theological thinking. It took him three 'lessons' to understand what God was saying to him.

However, what I consider extraordinary is that Peter realizes in his mind that God was not just talking about food. Face to face with Cornelius, Peter shows that he has made this astonishing link in his mind for he says, 'God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean' (v.28). Although God showed him items of food, Peter was able to establish its link with his own view of the Gentiles. He made the correlation in his mind between what he believed was important for his identity and therefore his self-esteem and what he now knew to be crucial for mission and his involvement in ministry with other people. One of the key regulations that he had religiously kept was shattered because of the mission of God. And all this was God's initiative.

We, too, will face and do face a very intense period of learning in mission and ministry. Often we cling to matters of cultural preference or ecclesiastical form as if they were a biblical mandate. Learning is hard work and in the stress of adjustment to a new setting, often we assume we understand a situation based on the external forms that we see. We do not make the effort to use our minds to try to understand the meanings behind the forms we see. For instance, we condemn an initiation rite and forbid Christians from participat-

ing in it because we perceive that divination is used in the rite. However, we do not take the time to discover what actually does occur in the rite, the meanings behind each activity. If we did, we would discover, for instance, that the purpose of the divination is to seek spiritual guidance in the life of the initiates. We cannot but wonder why Christians show little enthusiasm for the recommended 'substitute' rite which has been worked out with appropriate proof-texts. In our condemnation of the whole rite, therefore, we fail to let the Scriptures interpret the issue of spiritual guidance. The result is that Christians feel that the gospel does not address the meanings of initiation.

God wants us to develop the ongoing practice of cultivating our minds for his glory. It will not be a smooth and easy journey, but we are to develop a mind that is discerning, a mind that is gentle and passionate, and prepared to take into itself things that God affirms but with which we may not be comfortable. Peter must have felt very uncomfortable when he was confronted with what he had always thought was unclean. Yet he took it into himself.

Cultivating our minds for hearing the Word of God.

In the last few years, I have adopted the practice of reading the Word of God aloud to myself because I find that when I read it silently I do not listen, my mind is easily distracted and wanders off into unrelated thoughts. But when I read Scripture aloud, although the voice I hear is mine, God still speaks to me through my voice because I am reading his word.

Cultivating a mind for reading

According to J. P. Moreland, one reason why Christians have little influence in the public sphere is because 'they tend to browse self-help books or other literature that is not intellectually engaging'.¹¹ Cultivating a mind for reading and reading widely are part of our Christian discipleship. Reading is hard work and often when we finish reading a book, we remember little of what we have read. If we want to remember what we read, then it is important that we read with a pencil or pen in our hand and we take notes. J. Adler Mortimer advises readers to 'mark up' books, unless they are a library book or a first edition book because marking a book as we read it keeps us awake. It involves thinking, and thinking expresses itself in writing. A third benefit is that it helps us remember our thoughts and responses to the author. Mortimer describes reading as a 'conversation between you and the author.' He points out that

Understanding is a two-way operation; learning doesn't consist in being an empty receptacle. The learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. And marking a book is literally an expression of your differences, or agreement of opinion with the author.¹²

There are some things, however, I do not read. I make it a habit not to read romantic novels. Instead, I read biographies and historical novels as a way to cultivate an understanding of the lives of other people, the world and environment around me, and current issues in life. Some years ago, I started reading books on the lives of Islamic women and it took me into places in my mind I have never physically been to such as Iran and Pakistan. On a long flight to Australia, I was seated in the same row as a young man of Middle Eastern appearance. It was shortly after the September 11, 2001 destruction of the Twin Towers in New York, USA.

Initially, I was nervous, especially when he fiddled around in his bag. After six hours into the flight to Sydney, he suddenly looked at me and asked in an annoyed manner, 'How much further to Singapore?' I said, 'Six hours!' He rattled round in his bag again and then I noticed there was a book beside him. It made me more nervous because the writing looked like Arabic, but then I realized it was not Arabic, and I gathered the courage to ask him, 'Excuse me, is that book Persian?' As a result of that simple question and my correct guess, we had the most profound six-hour conversation to Singapore. The man left the plane with my copy of the Bible, and a promise to read it. Here was a man searching for God. The interesting thing, however, was that the conversation had begun with a discussion about an Iranian woman I had 'met' in my reading who started the School of Social Work in Iran.¹³

¹¹ J.P. Moreland, *Love your God*, p. 87.

¹² J. Adler Mortimer, 'How to Mark a Book', in *The McGraw-Hill Reader: Issues Across the Disciplines*, seventh edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000), pp. 61. See also Moreland, *Love your God*, p. 166.

¹³ Satterah Farman Farmian with Donna Munker, *Daughter of Persia* (Great Britain: Corgi Books), 1992.

Cultivating a mind for prayer

To cultivate a mind for prayer, we need to start by listening attentively to the Lord. We need to develop a mind for prayer, a mind that thinks in the context of prayer. We must then commit **our** mind to pray actively. Working with the Church in Northern Ghana has taught me the value of prayer. I used to struggle with going to all-night prayer meetings. There is none of this two-hour business on a Friday night. They would pray right through the night, starting at 8.00 pm and still staggering through at 5.00 am. At first, I would drink espresso coffee to keep me awake, but Northern Ghanaian Christians would stand up to keep themselves awake, and I learnt to do the same thing.

Cultivating relationships with people

We need to have a mind for relationships with people. We need to develop good relationships with people even if they have vastly different levels of education from us. We should never assume that just because someone does not have similar educational qualifications, they do not have a mind to think. It was a Northern Ghanaian woman who taught me never to make such assumptions. She had never been to school and could not speak English, yet night after night we sat together on the roof of her extended family house and we debated on issues with which we both struggled. She would argue with me, and as we debated, I realized that she had a brilliant mind, but unfortunately had never had the opportunity to learn in a formal school setting like

I had. I believe that if she had had the opportunity to learn she would probably have had a PhD today. However, she learned from life and has taught me a great deal about life. She would challenge me, argue with me and question my points of view. We discussed many things, including witchcraft and the Scriptures.

To cultivate relationships with people involves listening attentively to them and trying to understand their point of view even if we do not agree with them. All too often we are busy in our minds formulating a reply or we become caught up with our emotions and respond without being able to quietly reason. We need to focus our minds and concentrate and be as knowledgeable and well-informed as we can.

Cultivating a mind for mission and transformation

We also need to have a mind for mission and transformation. The Lord gave us a clear mandate to be involved in the making of disciples of all the nations. This involves not only the discipling of an individual spiritually, but the discipling of the person's mind—through the conversion and transformation of every aspect of the mind and thinking. However, engaging in mission also should have a personal benefit for the individual missionary. Kwame Bediako points out that 'Engaging in mission ... is a way of gaining insight and growing in understanding of the Gospel. Knowledge is experience and without such experience, our knowledge of faith is shallow

and superficial.¹⁴

Cultivating a mind for learning and scholarship

Finally, we need to have a mind for scholarship. Scholarship is not about abstract academia. The western Academy is often irrelevant. In many western universities, much research, even in faculties of theology, is irrelevant to life. Serious study of theology today can be found in the non-western world where we discover theology and scholarship that are living. In the non-western world, people are grappling with practical problems. It is such scholarship that needs to be restored in the western world, a scholarship that reflects on the living problems of living people within society. That is how the Christian doctrines were developed in the early church. They did not come out of a vacuum or ensue from abstract discussions. They emerged from the experience of theologians and Bible teachers struggling with the issues that people faced.

Andrew Walls very firmly anchors Christian scholarship in Christian mission. According to him, 'We need a cleansing of theological scholarship, a reorientation of academic theology to Christian mission, a return to the ideal of scholarship for the glory of God, a return to the ideal of the academic life as a liberating search for truth.' But he is also quick to point out that it may

require costly service, 'long training, constant self-discipline, intense labour, without being much noticed'.¹⁵

Anticipating reaction

Using our minds for the glory of God is not without problems and difficulties. People can resist and misunderstand our thinking and actions sometimes because of lack of knowledge, but at other times because it threatens the very core of the identity of the one who is doing the criticizing. Peter himself discovered this. If you read Acts 11, you will see how Peter was called to account for his interaction with Gentiles. We, too, also need to be prepared for a similar reaction like this when we use our minds in the way he did. Peter's response was not to push his own agenda. He simply related the story of what God had done and shown him. However, on another occasion, Peter drew back from the truth he had taken into himself (Galatians 2:11-14) because he feared those who criticised him for the stand he had taken.

Fear causes people to react in unpredictable ways: some seek to placate those who criticize them, while others in self-defence become excessively aggressive. At other times we submit to a self-pity and despondency that completely undermine our defences. Milena Jesenská, a Czech journalist, who died after four years in the Ravensbrück prisoner of war camp during the Second World War, made these comments on fear before her

14 Kwame Bediako, 'The African renaissance and Theological Reconstruction: the Challenge of the Twenty-first Century', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (December 2001), p. 31.

15 Andrew Walls, 'Christian Scholarship in Africa in the Twenty-first Century', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (December 2001), pp. 48, 51.

arrest: 'The funny thing about fear is that it won't let you stand still. ... When I stand still, it means I am calmly anticipating the unknown, I'm prepared for it.'¹⁶ Although her observations on fear were made in the context of people facing arrest and physical death, we can perceive the criticism of our ideas and actions to be a form of psychological restraint akin to death.

The natural reaction is usually frenetic activity to defend our position or aggressive verbal attack or a desire to humiliate our critics or retreat into despondency. We do not take the time to stand still either before we meet our critics or after we have heard their comments. There are many difficulties we face in learning and in using our minds. At times we will not see our way clearly. In using our minds, it is not a matter of just applying techniques or methods. We will make mistakes and may even retreat under genuine criticism. The result of such a retreat is

that we do not learn from our mistakes. If there is a misunderstanding, our retreat does not enable us to use the experience to become more effective in our communication. Nevertheless, we often gain from experience and our greatest learning comes from our mistakes.

Loving the Lord with the mind

In conclusion, we see from Scripture that the core purpose of our mind as a faculty of understanding, feeling and desiring is to wholeheartedly love the Lord our God. His Spirit empowers our mind to have that faculty to perceive, judge, or discern calmly and impartially. However, this is not an avenue for any form of pride, but we are to have a wise mind and think modestly of ourselves. In our response to the Lord in the context of mission, as in our ministry and service, we are to grasp God's perspective with our mind and make it our own. Let us, therefore, make the most of our learning, and use our minds effectively to establish a credible Christian witness in the public sphere rather than let our minds stagnate by using them only in playing computer games.

16 Milena Jesenská, 'On the Art of Standing Still', in Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Milena: The Story of a Remarkable Woman* (New York, Schocken Books, originally published in German in 1977. Translation copy in 1988), p. 151.

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Learning as the Experience of God

Lee Wanak

KEYWORDS: *Spirituality, mysticism, bonding, reflection, belief, poverty, wealth, seminaries, culture, evaluation*

Introduction

THE relationship of experience and truth has been a tenuous one for evangelicals. We believe that the Bible is the only reliable source of divine truth. To hear someone say, 'God has spoken to me' or 'Through this experience God showed me ...' raises anger and scepticism among many traditional evangelicals. At times we see it as a challenge to Scripture and feel the need to protect its authority. These tensions obviously raise pedagogical issues in the church and seminary. Does God instruct us only through Scripture or does he use a variety of experiences as well?

Learning in the context of the Christian faith invokes images of listening to a preacher or reading Scripture and Christian books. Certainly God teaches us about himself and his ways through

these means and surely the Bible is the foundation of Christian truth. It is important, however, to distinguish between 'knowing about' God and knowing him intimately. Even the study of Scripture can be a 'knowing about' and not an intimate knowing. Intimacy requires relationship and experience. The Bible is true whether we apprehend its truths or not, but the Christian life is true only as we learn to intimately experience God and his ways.

I know my wife of thirty years very well. Since I know Dottie's habits and values, it is not difficult to predict her patterns with some degree of regularity. But even this is a 'knowing about.' An intimate knowing, like marriage, is a meshing of spirits, a bonding of hearts together. Jonah knew all about God—his graciousness, compassion, patience and forgiveness (Jonah 4:2)—but his heart was not one with God. Unfortunately, a great deal of teaching in the church and especially in the seminary is a 'knowing about' and not an intimate knowing. It is too often an

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understanding of the periphery and not the centre, the attributes but not the heart, the characteristics but not an experience of the living God. When Jesus said, 'I am the way and the truth, and the life' (John 14:6) he was not simply soliciting commitment to his teachings but, rather, an intimate relationship with him as Lord.

Although the testimony of Scripture is the primary means by which we know about God, he has also chosen to reveal himself in other ways. Philosophical arguments for God's existence and attributes and the witness of creation (Rom. 1:20) are rational approaches to knowing about God. The testimony of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16, Gal. 4:6), and proximal and personal encounters with the Divine (Ex. 33:20-23) are relational approaches that emphasize affective learning based on the experience of God. To know God intimately is to know him both in the experience of personal salvation and in the experiences of everyday life.

What does it mean then, to learn in the context of spiritual growth? Botton, King and Venugopal discuss three aspects of spirituality: the affective, the activist, and the cognitive.¹ Ideally, the three aspects are interactive and mutually stimulating. Learning as the experience of God emphasizes the unity of these three aspects. Evangelicals tend to emphasize cognitive learning processes associated with the Word. Certainly this is not a defective

form of spiritual learning, since knowing about God is foundational to spiritual growth. It is, however, incomplete. The 'knowing about' we gain from the Bible is to promote intimate knowing in our daily walk with God, but it does not happen automatically. Although such cognitive exercises as Scripture memory or reciting doctrine may be distinguished from experiential learning, ideally these practices are to promote growth when approached holistically and integratively in shaping who we are and in understanding the nature of our world.

In one sense learning in the context of spiritual growth must be distinguished from the logical and philosophical processes of doing theology. There is a quantum difference between knowing about God and experiencing God in our lives. Having an intimate knowledge of theology is not the same as having an intimate knowledge of God. The former creates systems, terminologies, definitions and categories that lead to logical understanding. Disconnected from personal experience, this kind of knowledge is dry. The latter is living water. It is the touch of the Almighty. It is a knowing too deep for words.

Yet if intimate experience is disconnected from the Word of God, it can lead to mystical delusion. In this instance people put words into God's mouth and shape him in their image. This results in intimate spiritual experiences, but not with God. The other extreme occurs when people so strongly emphasize the sole authority of Scripture that they fear God speaking through experience. They develop *charisphobia*, a fear of the gracious gifts God bestows on us. They fear the

¹ Ken Botton, Chuck King, and Junias Venugopal, 'Educating for Spirituality', *Christian Education Journal*, Vol NS:1(1997), pp. 33-35.

immanence of God, his breaking into our lives with the touch of his presence. We may allow him to enter space and time to answer our prayers, but he should not leave any footprints as he returns to his transcendent realm. Learning as the experience of God requires us not to be hoodwinked by these two deceptive extremes.

What then is learning as the experience of God? Allow me to offer a definition. As believers bonded to Christ, it is the process of reflecting upon the experience of God and his ways as understood through Scripture. This contains four elements: bonding, reflection, experience, and Scripture. These do not represent a taxonomy or hierarchy, rather, they are interactive ingredients that serve as benchmarks for spiritual growth processes.

Bonding

Bonding sets the affective tone for learning. In psychology bonding refers to a mutual, ongoing relationship between an offspring and a parent. It can also refer to deep friendships that develop, especially during intense experiences. Without experiencing the love that comes through bonding, infants fail to thrive. They may eventually become sociopathic, develop psychotic tendencies, or even die. Bonding is a basic human need that extends into the spiritual realm and shapes the parameters of our relationship with God. The Lord says, 'Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!' (Is. 49:15).

Several biblical metaphors illustrate this bonding relationship. The

church as the bride of Christ illustrates the bond of the marriage metaphor. The father-son (child) metaphor and the associated adoption and inheritance metaphors identify our relationship to God by covenant (Dt. 14:1-2, Gal. 4:7). He calls Ephraim his 'dear son,' the child of his 'delight' (Jer. 31:20). The Psalmist likened the Lord's compassion to that of a father for his children (Ps. 103:13) and the Lord finds pleasure in his people calling him Father (Is. 63:16, Mt. 6:9).

The relationship between the Lord and Israel is also compared to that of husband and wife. He longs for his people to receive him as a wife receives her husband (Hos. 2:16). He desires to show his love to his people and to hear them say, 'You are my God' (Hos. 2:23). A covenant or testament has formal, contractual connotations but in Scripture it also carries the emotive connotations of bonding. Loving-kindness or covenant love (*hesed*) was not found in ancient Near Eastern treaties and was unique to God's covenant with Israel.² A marriage contract expresses a covenant relationship, but marriage can never be experienced as a document. To be viable, marriage must be experienced in reality. A viable faith goes beyond doctrine. It is to be lived out day by day in covenant relationship. Bonding with God is more than knowledge of the covenant or even obedience to the covenant—it requires the passionate expression of love.

Also related to the idea of bonding is the lord-servant metaphor. The King James Version, for example, used the

² 'Covenant, Alliance', *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, Second Edition, 1986), p. 240.

term *bondservant* in describing Paul's relationship of faithfulness and obedience to Christ even in the face of undeserved suffering. In the ancient world the teacher-disciple relationship illustrated a special bond where one shared in the life of the master and learned from his words. A natural outcome of this relationship was carrying on the teaching of the master. In reference to Jesus, this relationship begins with a personal call and requires exclusive allegiance to him. Finally, the metaphor of the body of Christ expresses the bond of unity among members issuing forth from the head, Christ himself.

Although knowing about God does not require a spiritual bond with him, intimately knowing him is premised upon living out our covenant relationship with him—'I will be your God and you will be my people' (Jer. 7:23). Learning as the experience of God begins by nurturing our bond to Christ. Just as an infant bonds to its nurturing mother, we are to 'crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it [we] may grow up in [our] salvation' (1 Pet. 2:2).

Reflection

The second element in our definition of learning as the experience of God is reflection. For the Christian, reflection is a spiritual, psychological and intellectual process that integrates faith and experience, theory and practice. Reflection is a process that is to result in holistic change, not just of individuals, but also in corporate and cultural patterns and values. Before Joshua began his role as the leader of Israel, the Lord said to him,

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (Josh. 1:8).

For Joshua, reflection was a process of synthesis, understanding the Law of God in the conquest, integrating text and context. Israel's experience at Ai put flesh upon the bones of the Law by demonstrating God's holiness. It is through reflection that we learn about the 'Achan' in us as a result of experiencing the 'Ais' in our lives.

My mother was a very patient woman. Enjoying our childhood games, my brothers and I often ignored her repeated calls to come home for lunch. One summer afternoon we belatedly meandered in at about 2:00 p.m., dirty, tired and famished. Upon our arrival we were greeted with a generous portion of motherly discipline instead of the usual sandwich and milk. In the nearly forty years since that experience I have not forgotten the law of promptness, but have learned to put others' interests before my desires. Experience coupled with reflection is a valuable teacher in shaping our lives.

The value of reflection is also seen from the perspective of practice. We can regularly face the same dilemmas in life, but without reflection we continue to make the same mistakes. Peter was a man of great faith, but he also had difficulty with anger and forgiveness (Mt. 18:21, John 18:10). His experience of the resurrected Jesus forgiving his denial no doubt had a profound effect on his spiritual growth. By the writing of Second Peter we find a man tempered by the love of Christ.

The Bill Murray film, *Ground Hog Day*, illustrates this point. Murray, an obnoxious, arrogant TV weather man, is mysteriously caught in a cycle of *deja vu*, repeating the same day and same experiences over and over again. His evenings are spent reflecting upon his dilemma and slowly his behaviour and underlying attitudes begin to change. Murray is wonderfully transformed into a sensitive, caring human being as he analyses his behaviour day by day. We may not have the opportunity to relive the same contexts of our errors over and over again until we get it right, but this otherwise ridiculous film illustrates the value of reflection. Reflection on both Scripture and experience is essential to spiritual growth and is a practice the church must recapture.

Experience

God never intended people to learn in a vacuum. We live in a real world, with real experiences. Making sense of those experiences is part of the learning process. What is your source of knowledge? Many Christians will answer, 'the Scriptures.' But our personal experiences and the resultant learned social mores, family norms, and individual values form a complex grid by which we understand both the Word and our world. Our beliefs are significantly shaped by our upbringing, our commitments to people, by what we consider common sense, and by our behaviour. According to Downs, 'We have a greater tendency to believe what we do than do what we believe'.³

God is above all that. We are not. Our understanding of what is just or fair or true has a great deal to do with our background. Recently I asked a group of urban poor youth in a church what they would do if they found a lost wallet loaded with money. The almost unanimous response was, 'Thank the Lord.' Their grid led to the view that such a find was a blessing from God rather than an opportunity to demonstrate honesty in returning the wallet.

Many admire Jesus' grassroots ministry in bringing 'good news to the poor' (Luke 14:18). But like the wealthy man in the gospels who queried Jesus regarding eternal life, Christians prefer not to mix finances and faith. 'Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me"' (Mark 10:21). Jesus immediately tested the mettle of this man's incipient faith with the reality of experience. Faith is not just a statement of theological ideas and values, it is the way we live our lives, the outworking of our allegiance to God himself.

Understanding Religious Experiences

Religious experiences range from the naturalistic to the ecstatic. A young Martin Luther, caught in a terrible lightning storm, vowed to become a monk if God would only spare his life. Scripture addresses ecstatic experiences—tongues, visions, dreams, miracles, healings, prophecies, words of knowledge and wisdom—with such frequency that they appear to be nor-

³ Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 186.

mative for the Christian life. Although some may argue that God has ceased communicating in these ways, there are millions of people today who have experienced the touch of God through these means. How do we discern the voice of God in experience? What role do our pre-understandings play? Theology? Experience? Scripture? All these can be misunderstood or lead us to greater understanding. How do we sort it all out?

Some argue that sense experience is potentially deceptive and the Word of God is perfect. Correct, but although the Word of God is perfect, our understanding of it is always less than perfect. There is also truth in God's created world but our understanding of creation and our fellow humans, just as with Scripture, is less than perfect. It is normative in Scripture to theologise about experiences. When John the Baptist was doubting, Jesus encouraged him to reflect on sense experiences, 'The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised ...' (Luke 7:22). Elijah told the prophets of Baal, 'The god who answers by fire—he is God' (1 Kings 18:24). Jesus said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27). The incarnation itself validates sense experience. John wrote, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life' (1 John 1:1).

In the western church, ambivalence toward learning through experience is a reaction against the relativism of the

postmodernist era. Yet, Scripture itself encourages the interplay between experience and belief. It is easy to see how Scripture gives meaning and guidance to experience, but the converse can also be true. We may misunderstand Scripture but experience sets us straight. There are times that experiences should change our faith. Our beliefs and resultant practices may be wrong and God uses experience to bring change.

In Acts 10 Peter has a vision and his faith is forever changed. The vision is confusing and contrary to Peter's understanding of Jewish Christian norms. He is told to eat what is unclean. He is told to go to the home of a Gentile and Peter obeys the vision. There is a great outpouring of the Spirit of God and Peter learns some new truths about the ways of God. He concludes, 'God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean' (v. 28) and he recognizes that 'God does not show favouritism' (v. 34). In Acts 11, Peter theologises, the church theologises, and a new understanding emerges. Experience here teaches that the gospel is also for non-Jews. God uses experiences to correct our wrong or incomplete beliefs.

Just as our understandings are limited by our context, Peter's understandings were limited by his Jewishness. His ties to first century Jewish culture in this case hindered his understanding of the larger purposes of God, but by being sensitive to the experience of God and his ways he was able to overcome his narrow understandings and navigate his way through what Mezirow calls perspective transforma-

tion.⁴ His truth transmitting experience transformed him by correcting his belief structure. Our understanding of experience is to be guided by Scripture, and our understanding of Scripture is inevitably shaped by our experiences, pre-understandings and biases.

Those who tend to be *charisphobics* are naturally repulsed by religious phenomena, especially highly emotional behaviours or non-rational behaviours such as speaking in tongues. They desire to play down 'touchy/feely' religion and supernatural experiences in favour of logic and order. What knowledge we possess, our attitudes, our worldview or frame of reference, and even how we formulate explanations, all affect our ability to understand. Being aware of these things prepares us for gaining new understanding.

The Holy Spirit always seeks to lead us to greater truth, just as a teacher guides his student. John wrote, 'When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth' (John 16:13). But guidance is process, not product. We still know only in part. Only God knows perfectly, without contradiction or conflict. Only God makes perfect sense of everything. The Holy Spirit guides us both in the understanding of Scripture and his teaching through experience, but we cannot assume perfection in either realm. We need to humbly accept our limitations as humans and let God alone be God.

Poverty, Wealth and Experiencing God

Socioeconomic status can also influence our view of God. The wealthy may not feel a need for God. Their barns are full. They sense few gaps in their lives. The poverty and powerlessness experienced by the disadvantaged can bring them to closer dependence upon God. The vision of a listening God who intervenes in the affairs of life, bringing healing, justice or empowerment makes God an experiential reality to the 'have nots'. Of course, this can happen with the wealthy, but there is an intensity of prayer among the poor for their sick and dying, their imprisoned, and their marginalized.

As we experience the gaps in our lives, we have opportunity to know God in a special way. When God's lesson plan involves the test of suffering, James reminds us to 'consider it pure joy' (Jas. 1:2). Paul's sobering thought that God's curriculum for the faithful includes struggle and suffering (Philp. 1:29) reminds us that 'Christianity lite' is deceptively appealing but offers little nourishment. It knows little of the experience of God.

If poverty can urge us toward God, so too can the righteous use of power, position and wealth. Jesus clearly identified with the marginalized and the Bible tells us our experience of God relates to our treatment of the poor. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine [the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned], you did for me' (Mt. 25:40). The face of the beggars and street children we encounter

4 Jack Mezirow, 'How Critical Reflection Triggers Transformative Learning', in Jack Mezirow and associates, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1991) pp. 13-14.

everyday is the face of Jesus. We can experience God through our righteous and caring behaviour toward the marginalized elements of society.

Specifically, this parable also reminds us that we learn the righteousness of God through practising righteousness. This parable tells us that the working out of our faith in Christ through our treatment of the marginalized is indicative of our eternal destiny. The praxis coin has two sides, action and reflection. Some people tend to be ponderers, others practitioners. Both are essential in our experience of God and his ways.

Theological Schools and Experience of God

Having worked in the area of theological education for many years, I realize that the seminary is a great place for theory, but not necessarily for practice. I cannot identify specific ways in which my own studies in seminary resulted in closer relationship to God, but the need to support my family and pay for my studies greatly expanded my trust in *Jehovah Jireh*. There is a fundamental element to learning that only experience can fill. Sermons and Sunday school or any form of cognitive learning cannot, in themselves, develop Christian maturity. They are only forms. They can only plant the seeds of God's truth. It is how we water those seeds in the experiences of our lives that determines whether they will flower forth in spiritual growth.

The seminary is a world full of ideas

but we must ask, as does Brian Hill,⁵ is the seminary out of practice? Is a heady faith healthy, or is it as deformed and mis-shaped as the legalism of the Pharisees? Denis Edwards writes,

In the early church and in the writing of medieval thinkers, theology and experience are intimately linked However, after Thomas [Aquinas] we find the development of a dogmatic theology which is independent of religious experience and somewhat suspicious of it ...⁶

The separation of theology and practice has not been a healthy one. It naturally leads to theological irrelevance. This can be true even in the study of the Scriptures. Yes, 'the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword' (Heb. 4:12), but we can dull the edge by our own irrelevance, by neglecting the context of our own experience. If the word of God is living and active, it must be so as we apply it to life, as we flesh out its meaning in everyday experience. Conversely, experience apart from a theology based upon the Word will eventually succumb to the forces of society and culture.

Culture and the Experience of God

Culture, as a form of experience also shapes our thinking patterns. Hwa

⁵ Brian V. Hill, 'Theological Education: Is it Out of Practice?' *Evangelical Review of Theology* 10:2 (1986), pp. 174-182.

⁶ Denis Edwards, *Human Experience of God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), p. vii.

Yung,⁷ a Malaysian theological educator, points out culturally different ways of thinking. The West, for example, is dominantly conceptual, whereas China and East Asia emphasize relationships. How do differing thought patterns affect learning styles? Following Greek culture, Westerners tend to emphasize truth in terms of propositions. God is true in that he speaks the truth and does not lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). In the East, the emphasis tends to be more experiential, God is true in that he is reliable and faithful (Jer. 10:10).

Cultural dispositions toward learning styles have their strengths and weaknesses. Whether West or East, separating the cognitive from the affective will lead to a truncated view of God. Stripped of our superimposed biases, Christianity is holistic, balancing, and integrating head, heart and hands. A healthy Christian is one whose intellect, affections, and actions are in harmony with his God. When the mind is undeveloped, that is ignorance. When a person has no passion for life we say he is hollow, reduced to a robot. When skilful or purposeful action is lacking, we label the person as uncoordinated, clumsy, or just plain lazy. Learning as the experience of God gives shape to the new man. As the child Jesus 'grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him' (Luke 2:40).

7 Hwa Yung, 'Critical Issues Facing Theological Education in Asia.' An unpublished paper presented for the conference on Institutional Development for Theological Education in the Two-thirds World (1995).

Pedagogy and Experience

John Dewey wrote a little volume entitled *Experience and Education*⁸ which sought to balance the theoretical and practical in education. Formal education emphasized the classical disciplines focusing on transmitting the wisdom of the ages. While not desiring to lose this emphasis, Dewey sought a dynamic balance with contemporary life requiring students to explore, experiment and experience. This approach required purposeful learning connected to current realities.

The changes in some theological institutions illustrate the difference between classical education and progressive education curricula. The former emphasizes exegesis, theology, church history, and pastoral theology. The more modern approach emphasizes spiritual, ministerial, and academic formation, categories that can more closely relate to present realities. The more modern approach values praxis, integration, holism, contextualization and interdisciplinary thought and practice.

According to Dewey there is 'an intimate and necessary relationship between the processes of actual experience and education'. Yet, Dewey argues that not all experiences are 'genuinely or equally educative'. Quality of experience is a key factor in developing growth in students⁹. He refers to an experiential continuum based on the relative worth of the experience.

8 John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1938).

9 Dewey, *Experience and Education*, pp. 20, 25-27.

Several criteria emerge in determining whether experiences are educative or mis-educative. To what degree is the experience democratic or autocratic? Do successive experiences progressively modify the student? Does it build self-control and self-awareness? Does it bring growth to the individual and to society? Is it a moving force that arouses curiosity and strengthens initiative? Does it facilitate the formation of appropriate attitudes, desires and purposes? Do the experiences build understanding of others and develop relationships?

Dewey disparages pedagogical styles that require students to amass knowledge from lectures and books only to divulge the knowledge in examinations, as if learning is to take place in a watertight container. What happens to the learning? Dewey responds that the learning is still sealed in the container, without connection to the experience of reality¹⁰. Scripture exhorts us to 'add' to our knowledge those attitudes and behaviours that find essential expression in the challenges of life (2 Pet. 1).

Experiencing God Through Others

God makes himself known by taking on forms understandable to man, the incarnation being the ultimate example. Man anthropomorphizes God. Calling God 'Father' and giving him human characteristics, point to our need for metaphor in grasping the nature of God. Our impressions of God, particu-

larly in our early years, are influenced by the godly (or ungodly) behaviour of significant others. An abusive and unloving father may invalidate the fatherhood of God metaphor. But even the abused and unloved may still maintain impressions of idealized fatherhood derived from proximal sources. We learn about God from godly models. Their behaviour shapes our impression of God. Paul recognized this in 1 Corinthians 11:1, 'Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.' It was Jesus' example of foot washing that gave such power to his words, 'Now that you know these things ... do them' (John 13:17).

God often breaks into our lives in the form of godly people. This is more than a 'knowing about,' it is the Spirit of God revealing himself through people. Each one of us, individually and corporately, is a curriculum, a course that reveals something of the nature of God; yes, mediated by frail humanity, but also empowered by the Spirit. John opens his gospel with the One who gave flesh to the Word, the *Logos*. He embodies and gives expression to the mind of God. We are called to do the same. Christians talk a great deal. An evangelical understanding of Christianity is proclamation based, so much so that we forget Jesus powerfully demonstrated his message by 'word *and* deed' (Luke 24:19, italics mine). He authenticated his words by his deeds.

Learning as the experience of God requires models and mentors. As a young Christian I was privileged to have a godly college group leader as well as committed college students model Christian community, and mentor me in living the Christian faith. I

10 Dewey, *Experience and Education*, pp. 47f.

saw God in them, they put flesh on the good news of the gospel. No amount of sermons or Bible exegesis can do that, no Sunday school lesson or catechetical instruction, in itself, can incarnate the Word. I learned about God's loving care through Christian friends who would fix a broken down car on a frozen winter night or help with a household move. I saw their care for drunks and drug addicts, for runaways and anyone who needed help. Yes, they were committed to the study of Scriptures, but the real lesson was taught when the word became flesh.

Evaluating Religious Experiences

Awareness of our own pre-understandings and biases, including jealousies, misgivings, and ill feelings, helps us understand how we process experiences. We need to be open but discerning regarding religious experiences. Some aspects or events may be the genuine work of the Spirit, others not. As we search the Scriptures we need an open mind that questions our own interpretations. This may mean rejecting absolutist answers which tend to be simplistic. Statements such as, 'tongues have ceased' or 'there are no cases of laughter in the Spirit in Scripture' (there are in church history) fail to recognize the diversity and complexity of God's work in the world.

Examine the effects of the experience. How has God been honoured, how were lives changed, and evil structures altered, either directly or indirectly? If experiences are tied to religious movements, find out about the lives of the leaders. How are their

interests served? What motivates them? If judgments are being made about the religious experiences of others, seek first hand observations and conversations with leaders before drawing conclusions. Do not base decisions on hearsay. Do all you can to uphold the unity of the faith, but be courageous enough to speak against what is false. Finally, pray for direction and discernment from the Holy Spirit.

Scripture

The final element in our definition of learning as the experience of God is the Scripture. Scripture has already been discussed at length in previous sections, so my purpose here is to summarize and synthesize. Learning as the experience of God requires the interplay between Scripture and experience and is a normal part of the Christian life. Religious experience should be understood or checked by Scripture. Because we need to make sense of life, our experiences help shape the questions we ask of the Scriptures and help us integrate biblical values into our lives. As previously discussed, the Word of God is perfect but our understanding is less than perfect, always somewhat inadequate. We cannot claim infallibility for our views, but experience can serve as a check on our understanding and practice of biblical principles.

It is natural for people to seek correspondence in the learning process, the need to check our understanding of Scripture by experience, and our understanding of experience by Scripture. Though our understanding of the ways of God is always partial, the Holy Spirit guides us in the process of

understanding truth and in living out truth in our everyday experiences. A mature faith doesn't 'need' all the answers to survive, but continues to seek an ever deepening understanding and integrates biblical truth with experience. A mature faith is not unbending and inflexible, rather, it wrestles with the contradictions of life. It flexes when evidence requires a change of perspective. It seeks dialogue with others in a sincere effort to build understanding.

Religious experiences, whether mystical and esoteric or everyday, involve both an encounter and an interpretation of that encounter. Interpretations are preconditioned by our previous experiences, assumptions, biases, and intellectual processes and capacities. They involve 'personal appropriation of the mystery of Christ'¹¹ including rituals, Christian community life and experiences of everyday life. Christians look for the hand of God in their lives, in beauty and ugliness, love and loneliness, birth and death, in creative activity and traditional patterns, and in strength and weakness. Our hermeneutic begins with seeking God and a desire to make sense of our world through knowing him.

Experience of God and his ways, as in all learning, is mediated by our own senses, perceptions, categories, and cultural norms. Though the Spirit of God can supersede these, often he uses them to bring light to our world and to guide us in making sense of our own realities. Thus religious experience is a mediated experience dependent upon a

derived hermeneutic. God, however, knows us very well—our personalities and thought patterns—and as the great contextualizer of truth nurtures and instructs us through the Word and our experiences in the world.

Given an imperfect hermeneutic how can we know the will of God? If learning in the Christian life has a significant experiential component, then knowing the ways of God and his direction for our lives is essential to spiritual growth.¹²

Edwards points to four criteria: Will a particular direction blossom forth in the fruit of the Spirit or the flesh (Gal. 5:19-23)? Does it build up the community of believers, the church (1 Cor. 12-14)? Does it demonstrate love? Does it lead people closer to Christ (1 Cor. 12:3, I John 4:2-3)? Seeking answers to these questions helps us grasp God's direction for our lives.

Teaching for the Experience of God

If the role of the church is to promote learning as the experience of God and his ways, then how do we teach for the experience of God? How do we encourage bonding, reflection, understanding life experience, and the proper use of Scripture?

Bonding

Our bond to Christ and the people known by his name begins with our personal encounter leading to salvation. We need to lead people to a personal encounter with Christ, but all too

¹¹ Denis Edwards, *Human Experience of God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), pp. 6-7, 13.

¹² Edwards, *Human Experience*, pp. 104-105.

often it ends there. The church attempts to domesticate people into its patterns and programs without developing the relationships that make people part of the family which is bonded to Christ. Modelling Christian love by building relationships and mentoring believers on a one-to-one basis or in small groups leads to bonding. Although such relational processes are not infallible (even Jesus lost one apostle), they promote the normative nature of bonding with Christ.

Formal and nonformal programs can encourage modelling and mentoring, but there is no substitute for building personal relationships. It is inadequate to simply teach Bible and doctrine. The Christian life must be demonstrated and experienced. When people recognize our intimate relationship with Christ, when they experience Christian friendship and care, they will desire the same bond we have with Christ. The church needs an organizational culture that is loving and open, a culture with willing models and mentors for living the Christian life. A focus on teaching the experience of God does not require a formal or even a nonformal role; it can and should spring forth from informal encounters demonstrating servant leadership and building the bonds of love in Christ.

Jesus touched people—men, women, children—and they touched him and followed him. He healed them and blessed them by his touch. We're so afraid of touch, but touch is part of the bonding process, part of learning the love of Christ. Encouraging bonding with Christ does not require teachers in the traditional sense. It does require people who are willing to serve and sacrifice, people who are eager to

utilize teachable moments in the experiences of life and extend their bond in Christ to others.

Reflection

Teaching reflection in relation to the experience of God and his ways is bridging faith and life. It is thinking Christianly about our experiences and context. From a Christian educator's perspective reflection is a process of synthesis that seeks to reconcile through transformation the tension between our experience and the Word, between our own mind and the mind of God. Paul wrote, 'Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will' (Rom. 12:2). Teaching for the experience of God is a mind renewing process that results in experientially approving the good that God has for us. John Murray writes,

It is to discover, to find out or to learn by experience what the will of God is and therefore to learn how approved the will of God is.... If life is aimless, stagnant, fruitless, lacking in content, it is because we are not entering by experience into the richness of God's will.¹³

Reflection cannot simply be done by telling people what to think or do. Indoctrination may result in right beliefs and even right actions, but it is hollow, instilling an ideological perspective which fails to reflect on group presuppositions and norms. In its extreme form it is cultic, and can over-

¹³ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 115.

whelm the will instead of empowering it in the service of Christ. Teaching the experience of God and his ways means enabling learners to develop a synergy between the Word and experience through praxis—the spiral of action and reflection. Encouraging reflection means challenging people to think beyond the superficial, posing deep questions about life, culture, values, and experiences.

Reflection is often thought of as a solitary process, but it can also be inspired by focus groups or counselling. Fostering dialogical processes can lead to reflection, especially when coupled with role play, simulation, case study, or writing.

Reflection requires us to take pause. Although it may occur as almost instantaneous insight, we need time to process our thoughts and experiences. In today's busy world of multimedia and mass communication, there is particular need to create spaces to reflect. Churches hold retreats for this purpose, but often schedules are crammed with speakers, food and fun. When do people get away to reflect? Where in our busy lives is there time for meditation and prayer? In contrast, the Korean church has its prayer mountains where people can be alone or meet in small groups to seek the face of God.

Experience

Jesus' use of experience was pivotal to his teaching methodology. He was with people in their everyday experiences and his environment was the source of his illustrations and instructional aids. He instructed them, sent them out to test their wings and debriefed them

when they returned. His teaching related Scripture to the issues of the day. He told thought provoking stories and parables that elicited reflection. He used healing and miracles to demonstrate the power of the kingdom. Jesus' teaching was grounded in the Word and experience oriented.

Teaching for the experience of God requires us to know our charges and their world, their problems and aspirations, and guide them in making sense of their experiences. According to Mezirow 'to make meaning means to make sense of an experience'.¹⁴

Christian teaching is more than telling. It involves designing reflection-producing experiences (immersions, ministry projects, unique relationships) and utilizing the life encounters of our students to reshape meaning schemes and perspectives through reflection. The teacher's role includes guiding students in capturing the essential elements of an experience and their attendant feelings, and then coaching people in shaping the meaning and purpose of their experiences. Teaching people to utilize Scripture properly and to listen to the Holy Spirit in this process is essential. If experiences are to transform perspectives, there must be a willingness to take the flack in challenging conventional wisdom and patterns.

Scripture

It has been the purpose of this article to rekindle the value of experience in church and theological education. Experience, however, cannot stand

14 Mezirow, 'Critical Reflection', p. 1.

alone. Teaching for the experience of God means guiding people in using Scripture to understand experience and make sense of their lives. Without the guiding light of God's word and the wisdom of the Spirit, experience can easily lead us down the wrong path. Conversely some biblicists want to disregard experience altogether, especially experiences of religious significance. These teachers remind us that emotions are fickle and experiences are untrustworthy. Taken to its extreme, this approach denies our humanity as well as the ability of an immanent and sovereign God to speak to the present human context. Balance in teaching is a fundamental principle we must uphold. If we teach Bible only in terms of its original context, we fail to touch the lives of people; we fail to answer the burning ethical and spiritual questions of modern life. Ideally,

theology is not esoteric philosophising; it is bridging text to context. Any hermeneutical or pedagogical practice weak in undergirding that bridge is doomed to irrelevance.

Conclusion

Learning as the experience of God and his ways is normative for the Christian life. Effective church and seminary education incorporates experience into the learning process by equipping people to use Scripture in making sense of their lives. It teaches them to be sensitive to the voice of God and to his actions in the world. It nurtures spiritual bonding with Christ and his people, encourages meditation on the text of Scripture and reflection on our context. It cannot be indoctrinational, but always incarnates the love of Christ and the ways of God.

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Christian Reflections on the Genetic Revolution

John Jefferson Davis

KEYWORDS: *Bio-ethics, genome, eugenics, DNA, creation, virtue, utilitarian, character, teleological, gene therapy, cloning*

ON June 26, 2000, Francis Collins and J. Craig Venter were at the White House to join President Clinton for the historic announcement that some ninety percent of the human genome had been mapped, completing the first stage of the Human Genome Project ahead of schedule. President Clinton declared that 'Today, we are learning the language in which God created life'. David Gushee, a Christian ethicist, commented that humanity '... will spend much of the 21st century attempting to speak that language ... Christians must participate in the international conversation about these changes before they become irreversible.'¹

This article is an attempt to contribute to that conversation on the eth-

ical implications of genetic research and technologies. After briefly surveying developments in genetics from Mendel to the Human Genome Project, key issues and concepts will be identified, and a biblical-theological framework for Christian ethical reflection will be outlined. It will then be argued that this framework can serve as a suitable starting point for ethical analysis of issues in this area such as genetic testing, genetic therapies, human enhancement, and cloning.

The Science of Genetics: Historical Background

The pioneering discoveries of Gregor Mendel in the 1860s mark the birth of the modern study of genetics, but even in ancient times plant and animal breeders had observed patterns of inheritance and variation and attempted to produce favourable varieties through guided selection. In ancient Greece, Aristotle speculated on the nature of inheritance and animal reproduction. It was only in the seven-

¹ David P. Gushee, 'A Matter of Life and Death: The Biotech Revolution', *Christian Ethics Today* 8:3 (June 2002), pp. 13-17 at 13.

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teenth century, however, that sexual reproduction in plants was confirmed, and it was not until 1838 that the cell was known to be the basic constituent of all living organisms.² In his landmark publication of 1859, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, Darwin proposed random variation and natural selection as the keys to the formation of new species, but the genetic basis of this process was as yet unknown.

In 1865 Gregor Mendel, who had studied physics before joining an Augustinian monastery in Brunn, Moravia,³ published in an obscure journal his seminal paper, 'Experiments on Plant Hybrids.' Mendel practised botany in the garden of the monastery and in his experiments with peas demonstrated how seven traits varied in mathematically predictable ways. Mendel hypothesized that discrete units of inheritance that he called 'factors' did not blend during fertilization. His theory of 'particulate' inheritance broke with traditional ideas of 'blend-

ing' inheritance and laid the foundations for the modern concept of the gene.

Mendel's research remained unknown and neglected until it was independently rediscovered around the turn of the century by the biologists Hugo deVries, Carl Correns, and Erik von Tschermak. In 1902 Walter Sutton proposed that the units of heredity were to be found on the chromosomes of the cells. In 1906 William Bateson, who coined the term 'gene', discovered the principle of linkage, in which several factors were located on the same chromosome and moved together as units.⁴

In the years prior to the First World War, T.H. Morgan and his graduate students at Columbia University conducted extensive breeding experiments with the fruit fly *Drosophila melanogaster*. Morgan's 1926 book, *The Theory of the Gene*, proved to be a landmark in the field and helped to bring about the widespread acceptance of Mendelian principles of heredity.

In 1927 one of Morgan's associates, H.J. Muller, demonstrated that exposure to X-rays could induce mutations in fruit flies. This work, for which Muller received the Nobel prize, was to assume great public policy significance in the years subsequent to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when citizen concern for the harmful effects of radiation became heightened.

The eugenics movement that

² Material in this section has been adapted from the author's article 'Human Enhancement Genetic Engineering and the Image of God,' in John and Paul Feinberg, eds., *Foundational Issues in Ethics* (Wheaton, IL: CrossWay Books, forthcoming). On the history of genetics, see also L.C. Dunn, *A Short History of Genetics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965); A.H. Sturtevant, *A History of Genetics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); David Suzuki and Peter Knudston, *Genetics: the Clash Between the New Genetics and Human Values* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 44ff.

³ Eric S. Lander and Robert A. Weinberg, 'Genomics: Journey to the Center of Biology', <www.britannica.com/bcom/original/article/print/0,5749,4701,00.html>

⁴ George W. Burns and Paul J. Bottino, *The Science of Genetics*, 6th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1989), p. 3.

emerged during the twentieth century represents one of the darker aspects of the history of genetics. The term 'eugenics' had been coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin. Galton understood the task of eugenics to be improving the human race by allowing 'the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable.'⁵ The history of the eugenics movement in America and Germany was to show that this 'science' could in fact become a tragic blending of pseudo-scientific ideas and racial prejudices imposed by the force of law on the socially disadvantaged.

In 1907 Indiana became the first state in America to pass a compulsory sterilization law, authorizing the forcible sterilization of the inmates of state institutions that were considered to be insane, 'feeble-minded', idiotic, or who were convicted rapists or criminals, as determined by a board of experts.⁶ Between 1907 and 1937 some thirty-two states had passed sterilization laws, and by 1958 some 60,000 sterilizations had been performed in the United States.⁷

In its now infamous decision of 1927, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Buck v. Bell* upheld a 1924 Virginia law that permitted the involuntary sterilization of the inmates of state institutions who were believed to be 'defective persons' whose reproduction represented a 'menace to society'.⁸ Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, writing for the majority, declared that the principle that justified compulsory vaccination was broad enough to justify '... cutting the fallopian tubes ... Three generations of imbeciles are enough.'⁹

In 1924 the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration Restriction Act, limiting immigration from countries in eastern and southern Europe. This law reflected influence of Charles Davenport and other activists in the eugenics movement, who believed in the superiority of the 'Nordic' races from northern Europe, and who believed that the vitality of the American racial stock was being weakened by the influx of the biologically inferior 'new' immigrants.¹⁰

The American sterilization laws were upheld as models in Nazi Germany. By the end of the Nazi era, some 350,000 forced sterilizations had been performed under the 1933 statute, the 'Law for the Protection of Genetically Diseased Offspring.' These forced sterilizations, based on pseudo-scientific

5 Cited in Ben Mitchell, 'Genetic Engineering - Bane or Blessing?' *Ethics and Medicine* 10:3 (1994), p. 51. On the history of the eugenics movement, see Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1963, 1984); Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

6 Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society*, p. 92.

7 Haller, *Eugenics*, p. 141.

8 Paul Lombardo, 'Eugenic Sterilization Laws,' <www.eugenicsarchive.org/html/eugenics/essay8text.html>

9 Cited in Henry Steele Commager and Milton Cantor, eds., *Documents of American History*, v.II, 10th edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988), pp. 216-217.

10 Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society*, p. 96.

ideas of 'racial hygiene,' set the stage for the German euthanasia movement and eventually, for the Nazi extermination of six million Jews.¹¹

The year 1953 saw the landmark discovery of the double-helical structure of the DNA molecule by Francis Crick and James Watson.¹² By 1966 DNA's complete coding sequence had been deciphered, in which the pairing of the amino acids Adenine (A) with Thymine (T) and Guanine (G) with Cytosine (C) on opposite sides of the strand explained how genetic information could be copied and how mutations could arise through imperfections in the copying process.¹³

In 1972 the first recombinant DNA molecules were synthesized in the laboratory, and in 1980 the Supreme Court ruled in *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* that a genetically modified organism could be patented. The U.S. Patent Office awarded a General Electric scientist a patent for an oil-eating bacterium that could help clean up oil spills.¹⁴ In 1982 human insulin was

synthesized through recombinant DNA technology, and in 1990 researchers at the National Institutes of Health performed the first sanctioned gene therapy trials, treating four-year old Ashanti DeSilva for a rare genetic disease called severe combined immune deficiency (SCID).¹⁵

1990 also marked the launching of the Human Genome Project, the largest collaborative project in the history of biological research.¹⁶ Advances in computer technology and automated DNA-sequencing devices enabled the project to proceed faster than scheduled. On June 26, 2000 Francis Collins and J. Craig Venter joined President Clinton at the White House to announce that a first draft of the human genome had been completed, mapping some 90 percent of the approximately 3 billion base pairs that are contained in every human cell. The president remarked, 'Today, we are learning the language in which God created life.'¹⁷

11 Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 95ff.

12 The original article is J.D. Watson and F.H.C. Crick, 'Molecular Structure of Nucleic Acids,' *Nature* 171: 4356 (April 25, 1953) 737-38. The story of the discovery is told in James D. Watson, *The Double Helix* (New York: Atheneum, 1968).

13 Lander, 'Genomics: Journey to the Center of Biology'; Jerry Bergman, 'How Genes Manufacture Plants and Animals,' *CEN Tech. Journal* 11:2 (1997), pp. 204-6, 'The Structure of DNA.'

14 Robert N. Proctor, 'Genomics and Eugenics: How Fair Is the Comparison?' in George Annos and Sherman Elias, eds., *Gene Mapping: Using Law and Ethics as Guides* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 69.

15 'Human Gene Therapy,' National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature, Georgetown University, <www.georgetown.edu/research/nrcbl/scopenotes/sn24.html>

16 For background on the Human Genome Project see Carina Dennis and Richard Gallagher, eds., *The Human Genome* (New York: Nature/Palgrave, 2001); Thomas F. Lee, *The Human Genome Project* (New York: Plenum Press, 1990).

17 Quoted in David P. Gushee, 'A Matter of Life and Death,' *Christian Ethics Today* 8:3 (June 2002), p. 13. The original report of the scientific consortium is found in International Human Genome Sequencing Consortium, 'Initial Sequencing and Analysis of the Human Genome,' *Nature* 409 (2001), pp. 860-921.

The Issues and the Terminology

The term 'genetic engineering' is now used somewhat broadly to refer to a number of techniques used to measure or modify the genetic characteristics of a living organism.¹⁸ One of the earliest occurrences of the term appeared in a 1969 editorial in the *New Scientist*, which stated that the day '... may be approaching when genetic engineering may make it possible to make a plant to order.'¹⁹ The term 'genetics,' referring to the scientific study of heredity and variation, was coined by the biologist William Bateson in 1905.²⁰ W. Johannsen proposed the term 'gene' in 1911 to refer to the basic units of inheritance that had been studied by Mendel

in the nineteenth century.²¹

For the purposes of this discussion, 'genetic engineering' is understood to refer to a range of interventions that would include the following: genetic testing and screening; genetic therapy; genetic enhancement; and cloning. *Genetic testing and screening* use various procedures to attempt to identify any one of a constantly growing number of genetically related disorders such as Downs syndrome, Tay-Sachs disease, haemophilia, Huntington's disease, cystic fibrosis, sickle-cell anaemia, PKU disorder, and many others.²² *Genetic therapy* corrects or attempts to correct genetic defects in any of the cells of the body.²³ *Genetic*

18 The focus of this article is on *human* genetic interventions. For discussions of the ethical issues raised in relation to genetically modified crops, see David Magnus, 'Genetically Modified Organisms,' *Medical Ethics*, Spring 2001, pp. 1ff.; L.L. Wolfenbarger and P.R. Phifer, 'The Ecological Risks and Benefits of Genetically Engineered Plants,' *Science* 290 (December 15, 2000), pp. 2088-92; Barry Commoner, 'Unraveling the DNA Myth: The Spurious Foundations of Genetic Engineering,' *Harpers* 304: 1821 (February 2002) 39-47. Helpful background information on both genetically modified plants and animals is found in the article by Darryl Macer, 'Genetic Engineering in 1990,' *Science and Christian Belief* 2:1 (April 1990), pp. 25-40.

19 *New Scientist* 415 (August 28, 1969), p. 2, cited in R.W. Burchfield, ed., *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 1213.

20 Burchfield, *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 1213.

21 Burchfield, *Supplement*, p.1211. Bateson also coined the term 'genotype' to refer to the genetic constitution of an individual. 'Gene,' derived from the Greek *genos*, 'birth', is now understood to refer to a segment of DNA on a chromosome that codes for one or more proteins.

22 Genetic tests are performed on adults, children, newborn infants, and more recently, on pre-implantation human embryos. *Genetic screening* generally refers to the testing of a target population thought to be at risk for a particular disorder, e.g., people of African-American descent for sickle-cell anaemia, or Jews of eastern European origin for Tay-Sachs disorder. The online version of the standard reference work *Mendelian Inheritance in Man*, lists a continuously updated list of human genes and thousands of genetically related disorders: National Center for Biotechnology Information, Johns Hopkins University, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Omim/

23 Various forms of genetic therapy can further be distinguished as 'somatic cell therapy,' which alter the somatic (body) cells but not the egg or sperm, and 'germ-line therapy,' which would modify the genetic composition of the egg or sperm, and so be transmitted to future generations.

enhancement would involve attempts to genetically modify an organism so as to improve a characteristic such as height, intelligence, memory, or lifespan. *Cloning* refers to the creation of one or more individuals with a genotype identical to that of the parent.²⁴ Each of these levels of genetic intervention, to be addressed below, raises its own set of ethical issues.

A Theological and Ethical Framework:

An evangelical approach to the ethical issues raised by the new genetic technologies will attempt to frame these questions within the larger context of biblical theology—the pattern of *creation, fall, redemption*, and the *new creation*—a movement that characterizes the overall sweep of God's redemptive action in history.²⁵ All of God's creation, including the human body, is *good* (Gen. 1:31; 1 Tim. 4:4) and as such is worthy of care and respect. Human beings occupy a unique place in creation, being made in the image and

likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), and consequently human life has sacred value and is to be accorded the greatest care and protection (cf. Gen. 9:6), from the time of conception (cf. Ps. 139:13-16) onward.²⁶

The biblical understanding of the created nature of man teaches that man is both 'spirit' and 'dust' (Gen. 2:7). As 'dust,' man shares with the lower creation a physical, chemical, and biological substrate that can be studied scientifically. As 'dust,' humans share the same DNA-based genetic code that is common to life on earth. As 'spirit,' however, man has a *spiritual* and *transcendent* nature that cannot be reduced to or completely understood in terms of physical, chemical, biological, or genetic categories alone. Biblical theology sees man not merely as a mechanism or object to be manipulated, but as a *morally responsible* personal agent whose personhood is adequately understood only in terms of a relationship to God.

Creation as man experiences it, however, is not in its original state, but *fallen* (Gen. 3:14-19) and imperfect, and subject to 'bondage and decay' (Rom. 8:20, 21). Birth defects, including those of genetic origin, can be understood in relation to this fallenness of creation (cf. Jn. 9:3). God's redemptive purpose in Jesus Christ is to heal the effects of sin and the curse

²⁴ The ethical issues posed in the suggested distinction between so-called 'therapeutic cloning,' involving the creation and subsequent destruction of a (human) embryo in order to harvest its stem cells for research purposes, and 'reproductive cloning,' intended to eventuate in a live birth, will be addressed below in the section 'Ethical Analysis.'

²⁵ For discussions of this pattern of biblical theology, especially as it is developed in the Pauline corpus, see Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: an Outline of His Theology*, tr. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), and George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 359-568.

²⁶ For a discussion of the biblical, theological, and philosophical basis for the 'personhood from conception' position, see John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1993), pp. 131-142.

both in humanity and the creation itself (Col. 1:19, 20). The healing ministry of Jesus was a demonstration of the truth and power of the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus (Matt. 9:35), and the alleviation of genetic diseases is consistent with God's redemptive purposes.

From the perspective of New Testament theology, the kingdom has 'already' arrived in power in the proclamation and actions of Jesus, but it is 'not yet' fully realized, awaiting the consummation of all things at the return of Christ. Consequently, Christian faith guards against *utopian* and unrealistic expectations of what genetic science can deliver in this life. Christian faith awaits the *new creation*, for only there will the results of sin—death, disease, pain, and deformity—be finally and completely overcome (Rev. 21:1-5; Rom. 8:21, 22), and all things made completely new.

Ethical reflection on the issues raised by genetic technologies can be informed by perspectives reflecting the three frameworks and five factors that would apply to the analysis of moral issues generally.²⁷ The problems raised by genetic interventions can be considered from the perspectives of *deontological*, *teleological*, and *consequentialist*

ethical theories.²⁸ Deontological theories emphasize duties, rules, and normative principles, and seek to determine what is intrinsically right in a given situation, with 'usefulness' or consequences as secondary considerations. A deontological approach to genetic issues would call attention, for example; to such values as the sanctity of human life and the demands of justice for both the individual and the social order. The concept of the sanctity of life is highly relevant, for example, to discussions of embryonic stem-cell research and the treatment of human embryos.

Teleological or goal-oriented theories could be characterized as ethics of *vision*, asking such questions as 'What does a good human life look like?', or, 'What does a good society look like? What choices should we be making in order to get from 'here' to 'there'?' Discussions of *character* or *virtue ethics* would fit within this general approach. This ethical framework might suggest such questions, in relation, for example, to proposals for human enhancement by genetic engineering, as 'What type of human beings should we seek to become? Is it in fact desirable to try

²⁷ For a discussion of methodology in Christian ethics, see John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1995), pp. 1-13; on methodology in bioethics, see Tom L. Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

²⁸ From a biblical perspective, these perspectives could be seen as complementary rather than as mutually exclusive. Biblical warrant can be found for all three approaches. The Ten Commandments are a paradigm of a deontological, law-oriented ethic. The Sermon on the Mount provides a basis for a New Testament teleological ethic, inasmuch as it reveals Jesus' vision of what a true disciple and life in the kingdom should look like. The legitimacy of consequentialist considerations are presupposed in the teachings of Jesus on *counting the cost* of discipleship (Lk.14:25-35).

to create humans who are smarter, taller, or stronger? Do we really want to create a new society of genetic 'haves' and 'have-nots'?

Consequentialist or *utilitarian* ethical systems focus on consequences or outcomes. Such a framework raises questions of 'the greatest good for the greatest number'. Sometimes called 'cost-benefit' ethics, such utilitarian approaches raise questions such as 'What utility or benefits are produced by a given choice or social policy? Are the benefits worth the costs that are involved?' In practice, in any utilitarian calculation the further questions need to be addressed, 'Benefits for whom? Costs for whom?' Social costs and social benefits should be justly distributed; a utilitarian calculation ought not to be abstracted from deontological considerations of intrinsic fairness.

A utilitarian perspective, informed properly by deontological and teleological considerations can be fruitfully applies to issues of genetic intervention. For example, in relation to government funding of research in the area of genetic therapies, issues of costs vs. benefits inevitably arise. From the perspective of an individual afflicted with a rare genetic disorder such as SCID (severe combined immune deficiency), it is highly desirable that money be spent on seeking a cure. The policy maker, however, must ask such questions, 'Given our limited financial resources, how much should we spend in seeking a cure for SCID, and how much for cures for cancer or heart disease? How can we achieve the greatest good for the greatest number, and be fair and just in the process?'

Christian ethical analysis on genetic interventions can be informed also by

the consideration of the following five factors or questions: norms, context, intention; means, and consequences. The first consideration, *norms*, has already been implied in the prior discussion of deontological ethics. Here the question would be, 'Is this genetic intervention consistent with the commands, precepts, and principles of scripture?' For example, those who believe that human life begins at conception, would find that the deliberate creation and destruction of human embryos for research purposes would violate the biblical principle of the *sacredness of life*.

The fifth factor, *consequences*, has also been discussed in relation to the utilitarian approach to ethics. Here the questions might be, 'What would be the consequences of these technologies—in the short and long term—for the individuals involved and for society?' It could also be noted that human beings have an imperfect ability to fully anticipate the consequences of a given action. For example, when *in vitro* fertilization techniques were first introduced to the general public, they were assumed to be safe for the children born as a result. Now, however, several studies have found evidence of small but significant increases in the incidence of birth defects for children conceived by this technique.²⁹ The long-

²⁹ See Michele Hansen, et al., 'The Risk of Major Birth Defects after Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection and In Vitro Fertilization,' *New England Journal of Medicine* 346: 10 (2002), pp. 725-30; and Laura A. Schieve, et al., 'Low and Very Low Birth Weight in Infants Conceived with Use of Assisted Reproductive Technology,' *New England Journal of Medicine* 346:10 (2002), pp. 731-37.

term consequences of a given action may be especially difficult to foresee. In light of the imperfections of human forecasting, it is all the more necessary to make ethical decisions within a deontological perspective that is based on principles and duties that are not limited merely to a special context or short-term benefits

Biblical ethics teaches that certain choices are right and good only within the proper *context*, e.g., sexual intercourse within the context of marriage. Questions of proper context can inform reflection on genetic issues that can impact the family and the parent-child bond. For example, it might be pointed out that techniques such as *pre-implantation genetic diagnosis*, at times now practised in connection with in vitro fertilization, is not a technique that should be abstracted from the context of family dynamics. Here the questions could be raised, 'How will this technique, which can select for a genetically "perfect" child, affect the parents' perception—or society's perception—of less-than-perfect children already born? Will it make parents and society less compassionate toward the handicapped?'

Biblical ethics teaches, with regard to the factor of *intention*, that for an action to be fully pleasing to God, that action must be done with right intent. Right intentions or motivations are those which are impelled by the love of God and neighbour (Mt. 22:37-40) and which seek to glorify and honour God (1 Cor. 10:31). Good intentions are necessary but not *sufficient* conditions for ethically right actions. Christian ethics recognizes the deceitfulness and self-justifying tendencies of the human heart; 'good intentions are good, but

good intentions alone are not enough.'

Finally, right actions require not only conformity to biblical norms; the proper context; right intention; good consequences or results; but *right means* as well. Good consequences are not to be produced by morally illegitimate means. The apostle Paul asks, 'Shall we do evil that good may come? Their condemnation is deserved' (Rom. 3:8). Using human subjects to test dangerous genetic therapies apart from full and informed consent regarding the possible risks could not be justified merely by appealing to the possible cures to be discovered. Human beings are not to be used solely or only as means to someone else's benefit.

The theological and ethical considerations developed here from a biblical perspective are not uniformly shared in the wider culture, and this of course complicates Christian efforts to be 'salt and light' in the public policy debates on the issues raised by the new genetics. Evangelical Christians are no longer the dominant shapers of the public culture in America, and the post-modern sensibility of pluralism, relativism, and pragmatism seems suspicious of all³⁰ moral absolutes. The pluralism of ethical values in American

30 For statements of postmodernism, see, for example, Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980). For assessments of postmodernism from an evangelical perspective, see David S. Dockery, ed., *The Challenge of Postmodernism: an Evangelical Engagement* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1995), and Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994).

culture makes it difficult if not impossible to adjudicate rival perspectives on such contentious issues as abortion or the moral status of the human embryo. Nevertheless, an evangelical voice, even if it is not the dominant voice, needs to be heard in the public square. Evangelicals can be 'salt and light' in the culture by witnessing to the sanctity of human life from its inception and to the non-reducibility of human life to its chemical and genetic constituents. Evangelicals can be counter-voices to the utilitarian and secular ways of thinking that could be too easily driven by the powerful forces of big science, big government, and the biotech industry.

Reflections on the Issues:

Since the 1960s *genetic testing and screening* has become available for a constantly growing list of genetic disorders including Down syndrome, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anaemia, PKU disease, Huntington's disease, Tay-Sachs disease, haemophilia, Lou Gehrig's disease, and certain forms of breast cancer.³¹ The screening of newborn infants for the rare metabolic disorder phenylketonuria (PKU), which can cause mental retardation but which can be treated

with a special diet, came into use in the early 1960s. In the 1970s screening of African-American infants for sickle-cell anaemia and of Ashkenazic Jews for Tay-Sachs disease was introduced in various localities.

Prenatal genetic tests can be performed using techniques including amniocentesis, alpha fetoprotein testing (AFP), or chorionic villus sampling (CVS), which examine the amniotic fluid, foetal cells, or the maternal or foetal blood.³² Amniocentesis, usually carried out at about the sixteenth week of pregnancy, is frequently offered to pregnant women 35 years of age or older who are thought to be at increased risk of giving birth to a child with Down syndrome or some other genetic disorder. There is a slight but significant (one-half of one percent) risk that the procedure of amniocentesis itself may cause a miscarriage. The miscarriage rate associated with chorionic villus sampling is believed to be on the order of one to two percent.³³

Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), which involves the removal of one or more cells from the embryo developing in vitro, was first described in 1989 and has been used to diagnose cystic fibrosis, Tay-Sachs disease, sickle-cell anaemia, PKU, and other disorders.³⁴ There appear to be no adverse short-term effects, but long-term data is unavailable. This proce-

31 A standard reference work in this area is R.J. Gardner and Grant R. Sutherland, *Chromosome Abnormalities and Genetic Counseling* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). General background information is provided in the article 'Genetic Testing and Genetic Screening,' National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature, Georgetown University, <www.georgetown.edu/research/nrcbl/scopenotes/sn22.html>

32 These procedures are described in Gardner and Sutherland, cited above, pp.336-44.

33 Elizabeth Kristol, 'Picture Perfect: the Politics of Prenatal Testing', *Ethics and Medicine* 9:2 (1993), pp. 23-31 at 24.

34 Thomas H. Murray and Erik Parens, 'Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis: Beginning a Long Conversation', *Medical Ethics* 9:2 (Spring 2002), pp. 1,2,8.

ture, which currently is costly and technically demanding, could become more common in the future.

By the late 1990s over 500 laboratories in universities, health departments, and commercial agencies were offering genetic testing.³⁵ It has been suggested that parents or prospective parents could be advised to consider genetic testing when one or more of the following five conditions obtain: 1) one parent has a genetic disorder; 2) the parents already have a child with a genetic disorder; 3) there is a family history of genetic disease; 4) the individual is known to be a carrier (e.g., the daughter of a father with haemophilia); or 5) the individual is a member of an ethnic group known to be at greater risk for a genetic disorder (e.g., Ashkenazic Jews for Tay-Sachs, or African-Americans for sickle-cell anaemia).³⁶

Those who are considering genetic testing will need to consider issues of cost; the reliability of the test and any risks involved; issues of privacy and disclosure to other family members; the availability of treatment for any disorder that may be discovered and the impact of such information on the emotional and psychological well-being of the individual and other family members.³⁷ Those who are committed to the

biblical teaching of the sanctity of life and who believe that human life begins at conception would not use such information for the selective abortion of genetically handicapped children. Genetic counsellors, who can provide medical background information and help in the interpretation of test results and probable risks are available through referral from the National Society of Genetic Counselors.³⁸

In 1990 researchers at the U.S. National Institutes of Health performed the first officially-sanctioned *gene therapy*, treating four-year old Ashanti DeSilva for a rare genetic disease, severe combined immune deficiency (SCID), which left her body vulnerable to every passing germ.³⁹ In this procedure the researchers removed white blood cells from the child's body, grew the cells in the laboratory, spliced missing genes into the cells, and rein-

Family? A Consumer's Guide to DNA Testing for Genetic Disorders (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997). The social and legal questions concerning privacy, confidentiality, and possible discrimination in health insurance and employment are addressed in Lori B. Andrews, *Future Perfect: Confronting Decisions about Genetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), and also in Justine Burley and John Harris, eds., *A Companion to Genetics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), Part V, 'Ethics, Law, and Policy,' pp. 349-407.

38 The current website for this organization is www.nsgc.org.

39 'Human Gene Therapy,' National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature, Georgetown University, <www.georgetown.edu/research/ncrbl/scopenotes/sn24.html> A comprehensive treatment of the issues raised by gene therapy can be found in Leroy Walters and Julie Gage Palmer, *The Ethics of Human Gene Therapy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

35 James C. Peterson, *Genetic Turning Points: the Ethics of Human Genetic Intervention* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), p. 150.

36 John C. Fletcher, *Coping with Genetic Disorders: a Guide for Clergy and Parents* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), pp. 26, 27. Fletcher provides helpful insights and case studies for pastoral counseling in this area.

37 Helpful discussion of such issues from a 'consumer's' perspective may be found in Doris Teichler Zallen, *Does It Run in the*

troduced the modified cells back into her bloodstream. While not providing a permanent cure, Ashanti's immune system was improved and she was subsequently able to attend school.

By the end of 1993 gene therapy protocols had been approved for cystic fibrosis, Gaucher's disease, and a number of other conditions. The death in October of 1999 of Jesse Gelsinger, the first known fatality in a gene therapy experiment, led to public demands for greater accountability and governmental oversight for such work.⁴⁰ The completion of the draft sequencing of the human genome in June of 2000, making available to scientists a greatly expanded knowledge base for studying genetic disorders, is very likely to increase dramatically the interest in and demand for new human gene therapies.

Earlier ethical discussion of gene therapy tended to be favourable, in principle, to *somatic cell* therapies that altered various body cells, but resistant toward *germ-line* therapies that would alter the human ovum or sperm, and so affect future generations.⁴¹ If, however, in a given case it could be firmly established, on the basis of rigorous clinical trials, that such therapies were safe and effective, it would seem that germ-line interventions would not be inconsistent with a general Christian mandate to alleviate human suffering. As James Peterson

has observed, such healing work can reflect God's gracious redemption. If the elimination of smallpox from the globe was a real benefit, then we might surely agree with Peterson that wiping out '... Tay-Sachs, Huntington, or Alzheimer's disease from our genetic heritage would be as well'.⁴²

The subject of *genetic enhancement* is highly controversial. If it should become possible at some time in the future to safely and effectively alter through genetic interventions human characteristics such as height, intelligence, need for sleep, memory, or lifespan, should such interventions be permitted or encouraged? The possibility of such interventions may be unlikely in the near future, given the complex, multifactorial, and at present poorly understood nature of the causal connection between these traits and the human genome. Nevertheless, given the rapid advances in genetic knowledge, such questions are not entirely hypothetical, and bear critical scrutiny.

Those who have favoured various genetic enhancements have argued that parents already seek to enhance their children's life prospects through education and other means, and that these technologies would be only an extension of current practices and attitudes; that the 'right to procreate' encompasses a right to make such choices for one's children; that the state should not limit individual choice, since such choices do no harm but rather produce benefits for the

40 'Human Gene Therapy,' p. 2, cited in note 39 above.

41 For the history of this discussion and a summary of the arguments for and against germ-line therapies, see Walters and Palmer, *The Ethics of Human Gene Therapy*, pp.60-98.

42 Peterson, *Genetic Turning Points*, p. 321. See pp. 306-321 for Peterson's discussion of the debate on germ-line therapies.

recipients; that the ends of such technologies—intelligence, longer lifespan, improved memory, etc.—are inherently desirable; and that in any case, it would be difficult if not impossible to prohibit the use of such technologies once they became generally available.⁴³

Critics of genetic enhancement have argued that such intervention would represent 'playing God,' a tampering with the human nature ordained by God; that there is no social consensus on what constitutes 'ideal' humanity; that it could exacerbate existing prejudices against handicapped persons; that it could lessen the diversity of the human gene pool; that it could foster further class divisions and undermine the premise of equality upon which democracy is based.⁴⁴

The arguments for and against genetic enhancements, involving as they do conflicting notions about such fundamental questions as the nature of human nature, individual rights, parenthood, and the limits of state power, are not easily resolved. These issues call for serious reflection and debate

during the years ahead as technology continues to advance.

The subject of *human cloning* has received heightened attention in the wake of the cloning of the sheep 'Dolly' by Ian Wilmut and his colleagues in Scotland in 1997. Dolly was created from one embryo that survived out of a total of 277 at the start of the experiment, raising grave questions about the safety of such procedures. In a subsequent interview Wilmut himself expressed strong opposition to human cloning, saying that such attempts would be 'appalling irresponsible', since any children born as a result would likely '... die within a few day of birth'.⁴⁵ Studies performed by researchers at Japan's National Institute of Infectious Diseases found that cloned mice died significantly earlier than their naturally-born counterparts, giving clear evidence that the cloning process caused life-shortening biological abnormalities.⁴⁶

Public opinion polls have registered strong opposition to human cloning. A poll by ABC's *Nightline* program released the day after the Dolly announcement reported that 87 per cent of those polled supported a ban on

43 The arguments on this issue of genetic enhancement are reviewed in Walters and Palmer, *Ethics of Human Gene Therapy*, pp. 99-142. A cautiously favourable stance is presented in James Peterson, *Genetic Turning Points*, pp.275-288, and also in John Jefferson Davis, 'Human Enhancement Genetic Engineering and the Image of God,' cited in note 1 above.

44 This last point is a major premise in Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, p. 7: '... a technology powerful enough to reshape what we are will have possibly malign consequences for liberal democracy and the nature of politics itself.'

45 Ian Wilmut, 'The Ethics of Cloning,' *The American Enterprise* 9:5 (1998), p. 57; and Rudolf Jaenisch and Ian Wilmut, 'Don't Clone Humans', *Science* 291:5513 (2001), p. 2552; for further scientific background on the techniques of cloning, see Jose B. Cibelli, Robert P. Lanza and Michael D. West, 'The First Human Clone,' *Scientific American*, January 2002, pp. 44-51, and the website <www.sciam.com/explorations/2001/112401.ezzell/>

46 Raja Mishra, 'Shorter Lifespan Found in Study of Cloned Mice', *Boston Globe* (February 11, 2002), p. A1.

human cloning.⁴⁷

Even apart from considerations of safety, there are a variety of weighty objections to human cloning. Such techniques endanger human dignity by treating human persons as commodities to be manufactured, rather than as treasured members of a family covenant.⁴⁸ Healthy family relationships could be undermined, inasmuch as reproductive cloning would erode the child's sense of separateness from the parents and siblings that is necessary for healthy psychological development.⁴⁹ From the perspective of a Christian theology of the Trinity, which sees the divine community of three *distinct* persons—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—as a paradigm for human relationships, human cloning would inten-

tionally undermine the sense of *individuality* that is an integral value for human persons, and so be unacceptable.

So-called 'therapeutic cloning,' which involves the deliberate creation of human embryos for the purpose of harvesting their stem cells for research purposes, is likewise ethically unacceptable. The stated *ends* of such manipulations—to use the stem cells to treat conditions such as Alzheimer's disease or muscular dystrophy—do not justify the *means* that are involved: the deliberate destruction of the embryo for someone else's benefit.⁵⁰

Concluding Reflections

This discussion will conclude by recalling the prediction made by Francis Fukuyama in his recent book, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*. According to this influential political scientist and social philosopher, genetic engineering will eventually prove to be '... the most consequential of all future developments in biotechnology,' because 'human nature is fundamental to our notions of justice, morality, and the good life, and all these will undergo change if this technology becomes widespread'.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Cited in Ben Mitchell, 'A Protestant Perspective on Cloning', *Ethics and Medicine* 14:1 (1998), pp. 26-30, at 26. As early as 1994 the Embryo Research Panel of the National Institutes of Health had recommended against the federal funding of human reproductive cloning: 'Major Conclusions and Recommendations from the Final Report of the NIH Human Embryo Research Panel', *Ethics and Medicine* 11:1 (1995), pp. 20-23.

⁴⁸ Mitchell, 'A Protestant Perspective on Cloning', p. 29. See also John S. Grabowski, 'Made Not Begotten: a Theological Analysis of Human Cloning', *Ethics and Medicine* 14:3 (1998), pp. 69-72.

⁴⁹ Helen Watt, 'Thinking Twice: Cloning and In Vitro Fertilization', *Ethics and Medicine* 18:2 (2002), pp. 35-43 at 37. Similar concerns are raised by Kurt A. Richardson, 'Human Reproduction by Cloning in Theological Perspective', *Valparaiso University Law Review* 32:2 (1998), pp. 739-752. A range of religious opinions on human cloning is found in Ronald Cole-Turner, *Human Cloning: Religious Responses* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ For background on the scientific issues surrounding embryonic stem cell research, and concerns about the safety of introducing such cells into the bodies of human subjects, see Maureen L. Condit, 'The Basics About Stem Cells,' *First Things*, January 2002, pp. 30-34.

⁵¹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future*, pp. 82, 83.

Genetic engineering is fraught with potentially enormous consequences, since it promises to give humanity the power to alter the nature of human nature itself. Those who understand the nature and purpose of human life from a biblical perspective need to be heard in present and future debates about the direction these new technologies should take. Otherwise, the

biotechnology revolution is likely to be driven primarily if not exclusively by scientific and business elites with little accountability to the general public. This brief discussion has attempted to provide Evangelical Christians with some of the necessary concepts and perspectives that can help them to contribute to these conversations in significant ways.

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Lessons from Paradise on Work, Marriage, and Freedom A Study of Genesis 2:4-3:24

Paul F. Scotchmer

KEYWORDS: *Paradise, worship, creation, sex, sin, autonomy, redemption, food*

THIS extraordinary tale, the first-ever Bible story, holds profound insights about life's most basic realities. The author directs particular attention to the meaning of work and marriage, the limits of human freedom, and the origins of sin, pain, suffering, death, and alienation. A single thread binds these topics: the gap between life as we know it and life as it is meant to be.

The story is composed of seven scenes,¹ best visualized as taking place in a round garden with three concentric

terraces. From north to south, a line is drawn through the garden. Scenes one and seven take place in the outermost circle, scenes two and six in the next circle toward the centre, scenes three and five in the next circle, and the climactic fourth scene in the innermost circle.

The story begins on the western side of the garden with the creation of the first man and woman. The story concludes on the eastern side, where the man and woman are escorted, like a couple of ill-mannered party guests, from the garden. Between these two points lies a tale of seduction, betrayal, and remorse.

The drama comes to a crushing climax in Genesis 3:6 with three simple words: 'and he ate'. No words ever recorded could hold greater meaning for the human race, except for the exclamation at the other end of salvation history: 'He has risen!' (Mark 16:6; cf Rom. 5:12-19).

Scene 1: The first circle (west side). Gen. 2:5-17. As the story

1 This outline is based upon the structural analysis of J. T. Walsh, 'Gen 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977): 161-77, with refinements by P. Auffret. Gordon J. Wenham follows the same outline in *Genesis 1-15* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), a book that has been especially helpful in my own efforts to gather information and insights for this paper.

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opens, Adam (literally, Man) is moulded like a piece of pottery from dust and given life from the breath of God. He finds himself in a place that earlier translators, borrowing from the Persian word for 'royal garden', called 'Paradise'. Within the garden, the man and woman are God's representatives on earth. In fact, they are rulers in God's own image over all creation (cf. 1:27-28) — an affirmation of great significance for the meaning of human work.

The Garden of Eden is more than a royal garden. It is the archetype of the tabernacle introduced by Moses, at God's direction, at Mount Sinai. Like the tabernacle, it is bedecked by gold and precious stones (2:12); it is 'served' (the same word as 'to till') by God's priestly representatives on earth; it is designed as a special meeting place for God and his people.

Yahweh-Elohim, the term for God in this scene, is far more personal than *Elohim*, the term used for God in Genesis 1. Adam is no longer simply a creation of the Creator-God; he stands in relation to the 'Lord God.' Although *Elohim* and *Yahweh-Elohim* are the same God, they are experienced in vastly different ways by the human person. This distinction becomes crucial in scene 3.

The 'tilling' or 'service' performed by Adam in the garden is good and pleasant. No hardship, pain, or struggle is associated with work at this time. And yet it is still work; in fact, it is the very picture of work intended by God from the beginning of time — an act of service happily performed for the benefit of humankind and the pleasure of God. In a later age, the apostle Paul would re-affirm the essential dignity of

work as an act of worship. He urged his fellow believers at Rome, where physical work was relegated to slaves, 'to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship' (Rom. 12:1). In the Garden of Eden, all work was performed as it was meant to be, as an act of worship.

According to the biblical story, man was made for work. The same was true in other Near Eastern accounts of human origins — but with a huge difference. In the biblical account, man was not brought into the world as a slave for the gods, to serve their physical needs and to relieve them of the drudgery of human labour. On the contrary, according to Genesis man was brought into the world to enjoy and manage a place of great beauty, order, and countless delights. In the Garden of Eden, God not only supplied the physical needs of man but offered surprising and unimaginable pleasures. The plants of the garden were fragrant and pleasing to the human eye. The land was replete with aromatic resins, glistening gold, and gemstones. The soil was fertile and naturally irrigated by a network of rivers and streams. It was into this idyllic world that God placed the only creature capable of communing with God.

Only one activity within the garden was proscribed: eating from 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. Vividly and concretely, the author of Genesis makes a point that contemporary writers (under the influence of Hellenistic thought) would be more inclined to articulate abstractly. Through the symbolism of the tree, the author teaches that the human person is free in all respects but one: deter-

mining what is right and what is wrong solely on the basis of human insight. According to the Scriptures, when human beings assert themselves as autonomous moral agents, they choose the way of death (2:17). In the words of the Psalmist, they are 'like the chaff that the wind blows away' (Psalm 1).

Scene 2: The second circle (west side). Gen. 2:18-25. The garden was lovely, and all was well, with a single exception: Adam was lonely. He was with God. He enjoyed his work. He was surrounded by beauty and objects of pleasure. But he was alone.

The creation of Eve reads like a child's tale. One by one, and with picturesque simplicity, God introduces the new animals of this new world: 'He brought them to the man to see what he would name them' (2:19). They were doubtless all very charming in their own ways, but Adam was still alone: 'no suitable helper was found' (2:20). The reader can almost hear Adam's response as each new living creation is modelled on the runway: 'Yes, very nice ... amusing ... delightful ... impressive.... I will call it such and such.' But then, to himself: 'That's not it.'

What Adam needed was a real companion, a fellow human being and 'helpmeet' (KJV), someone to complement his strengths and help complete his life. So God 'built' him a woman. To create this new being, the story says that God used Adam's own rib, a piece of anatomy of great strength and nearest the heart of man.²

Did God literally use a 'rib' to make the first woman? R. K. Harrison

regards this translation of the Hebrew word (which has many meanings) as a misrepresentation. The real intention of the passage, according to Harrison, is to indicate (albeit graphically) the organic and spiritual bond between the man and woman, as compared to other species of life.

In any case, when Adam saw the woman, he was inspired to issue his first recorded words (2:23), an extemporaneous poem:

This one! At last! Bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh!

This one shall be called woman,
for from man was she taken, this
one!

Adam had found, to be sure,
'Heav'n's last best gift, my ever new
delight' (Milton).

The man and woman were naked, but they were not ashamed. The point is not, as some suppose, that they were ignorant of their sexuality. Of this notion the Puritan Milton spoke derisively, noting that 'hypocrites austere talk of purity and place and innocence (*sic*), defaming as impure what God declares to be pure.' Rather, the first couple had a pure view of sexuality. And their melding as 'one flesh' — a term that refers to the entire marital bond — was even stronger than the blood ties with parents (2:24).

The original readers of Genesis, let us recall, lived in a patriarchal society. In that culture, forsaking one's father or mother was no light affair. In the most literal sense, it meant abandoning one's siblings, clan, tribe, and nation; breaking from the customs, mores, rituals, moral standards, and religious foundations of the community; losing one's household goods,

² R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 555-556.

gods, and property.

Does the Book of Genesis require all of this for the sake of marriage? Not at all. No more than Jesus' recitation of Micah ('a man against his father, a daughter against her mother') was a call to violence (cf. Mt. 10:34-39). The point is simply this: parents, and all they represent in a patriarchal society, are to be valued less than one's bride or groom. Such is the strength of the tribute that Genesis pays to the marital bond in the Garden of Eden.

For the modern man and woman, the value of the marriage bond must be measured in a different coin. The competing force in today's world is not the patriarchal family, but Self. The marital bond is now in tension with 'individual liberty', 'personal freedom', and 'rights' of every description. Marriage in the modern age calls for sacrifice of a different sort: sacrifice of self-interest on the altar of intimacy, mutual trust, and fidelity. Marriage today calls for the constant giving of Self to the Other, and to the new life that proceeds from physical intimacy with the Other. It calls for limits on time spent elsewhere — in play or in work, especially work.

Have those doughty Puritans, who knew so well the biblical meaning of work and calling, overly influenced us, perhaps? As capitalism began to flourish in 17th-century British society, the Puritans led the charge. Taking their Bible seriously, they honoured the divine mandate to fill and subdue the earth. But work, like anything else, can be over-emphasized. Withal Milton, through the voice of Adam, reminds his brethren that friendship and affection — especially between husband and wife — are even more to be valued than work:

[N]ot so strictly hath our Lord imposed

Labour, as to debar us when we need

Refreshment, whether food, or talk between,

Food of the mind, or this sweet intercourse

Of looks and smiles, for smiles from reason flow,

To brute denied, and are of love the food,

Love not the lowest end of human life.

For not to irksome toil, but to delight to reason joined.

So far, the story has been positive. But as the players — the man, the woman, and a newcomer on the scene — move toward the centre, the tension builds. Abruptly, the serpent is introduced, and in terms that put the reader on notice of problems ahead (3:1). In no time, the creature without ribs, beneath the man, approached the creature built from a rib, beside the man.

Scene 3: The third circle (west side). Gen. 3:1-5. The conversation was subtle and urbane. For the woman, it was intoxicating. Like a couple of sophisticates hobnobbing at a party, the woman and the serpent refer to God as *Elohim* (the Creator-God), rather than *Yahweh-Elohim* (the Covenant-God). In doing so, they intentionally objectify the Almighty, depicting their maker as someone remote and official, rather than close and personal. God is no longer Thou, but It. He is now the object of a new discipline, founded by the woman and the serpent: theology, the study of God.

The woman, for her part, rationalized her imminent actions by exagger-

ating God's requirements. Falsely, she said that God had forbidden the couple to touch the fruit; in fact, he had only forbidden the couple to eat the fruit. The serpent, for his part, underplayed God's penalties. He assured the woman that she would become enlightened and more like God by eating the fruit. He told her that she would not die — contrary to what God had stated.

In one sense, Satan was right. For as the story goes on, we learn that Adam and Eve did not keel over and die after eating the fruit. Adam lived for a grand total of 930 years (Gen. 5:5). But the devil was dealing with death (his specialty) in simplistic terms. He failed to mention the eventuality of physical death and the immediate reality of spiritual death. Falsely, he assured Eve that she had much to gain and nothing to lose by her act of disobedience.

Scene 4: The inner circle. Gen. 3:6-8. When the woman saw that the tree of knowledge was good to eat, she lusted for its fruit, especially for the insights it would yield. So she took the fruit, and ate. She also gave to her husband. *And he ate.*

Suddenly, things began to change before their eyes. The serpent was right: their eyes were opened. But the new insights were not pleasant. 'Soon found their eyes how opened, and their minds how darkened,' wrote the blind poet in *Paradise Lost*. And in that Faustian bargain 'innocence, that as a veil had shadowed them from knowing ill, was gone....'

Before each other, the man and woman were uncomfortable in their physical nakedness. Before God, they were uncomfortable in their spiritual nakedness. Frantically, they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves and to

hide themselves from God.

Scenes 5: The third circle (east side). Gen. 3:9-13. Gently, God called out to the man: 'Where are you?' Awkwardly, the man explained: 'I was afraid because I was naked.' Rhetorically, God asked how he knew he was naked: 'Have you eaten from the tree...?' Patiently, God listened as Adam shifted the blame to the woman — and to God himself: 'The woman you put here with me....' God continued to listen as the woman shifted the blame to the serpent: 'The serpent deceived me.' But toward the serpent, God showed no patience. The Liar was refused a chance to speak.

Scene 6: The second circle (east side). Gen. 3:14-21. After hearing the couple's sorry excuses, God systematically worked his way back up the line, meting out punishments along the way: first to the serpent, then to the woman, and finally to the man. No one was innocent, and no one was spared.

Of all the animals that God had made, the serpent would occupy the lowest place on earth. Henceforth, it would slither on the ground, eating the dust beneath man's feet. Trust between the woman and the serpent was replaced by perpetual enmity, through the seed of both; the serpent would strike at man's foot and man's foot would crush the serpent's head.

These words represent far more than an etiology of human alienation involving man and the wild. God's curse was upon the embodiment of evil. It presaged a long struggle between the human creation and the forces of death. Just as the man and woman represented God's own image in its earthly expression, the dust-eating serpent

represented the face of evil. But the human creation, with God at his side, would have the upper hand in this protracted struggle. Ultimately, the man and woman would triumph, with God's help (cf. Rom. 16:20). And unlike the serpent and the ground, the man and woman would never be cursed. Rather, they would be blessed, again and again, despite their many shortcomings.

The woman's penalty was twofold: pain in childbirth and an inordinate desire for her husband. Implicit in this passage is the idea that childbearing, like work ('tilling'), is a basic aspect of human nature. But never again would either be experienced in quite the way they were intended at Creation. The pain of childbirth would be extreme, and yet attraction to the man would remain strong. The passage seems to suggest a compulsive quality to a woman's attraction to a man. The attraction is normal; the compulsion is not. Like the pain of childbirth, the tendency for women to 'love too much' is part of the female experience in a fallen world. The intent of God is otherwise, for God is good.

The man's penalty was directed toward his work as the supplier of food. 'In pain' — the same word used in reference to childbirth — 'you will eat.' Although work itself is part of the order of creation, the hardship, struggle, and drudgery so often associated with work are not. Man was meant to rule over nature. But east of the garden, 'thorns and thistles' are as certain as death itself, staples of life until man's return to the dust, from whence he came. But again, the point of the biblical story is not that the hardships associated with work should be accepted (leastwise perpetuated) with-

out attempts to alleviate them. For even in a fallen world, work is for man, not man for work.

Scene 7: The first circle (east side). Gen. 3:22-24. In the final scene, as in the first, God dominated the action. Having partaken from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the man and woman were no longer to have access to the tree of life. For this reason, God drove the couple from the garden, relying upon fierce cherubim and a flaming sword to prevent their return (and access to the tree of life).

But that was then. With the appearance of 'a new Adam,' Scripture presents a more hopeful view of life: 'To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (Rev. 2:7). So said the 'the First and the Last'. Dressed in a robe, with hair as white as wool, eyes blazing like fire, and a double-edged sword in his mouth, he spoke in a vision to the apostle of love. To those (who overcome) within the seven churches, and to all those that emerge as believers as a result of their witness, he promised the right to eat from the tree of life. He also promised that the world as a whole would be touched by the grace of God, for 'the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations' (Rev. 22:2).

So let us not despair. The human assignment is not to renounce the world in order to avoid suffering, but to accept suffering, as needed, in order to redeem the world. To overcome is to restore the image of God to its fullest potential, using freedom wisely. To overcome is to restore every facet of God's world to its intended state, free of every form of alienation, not least in the arenas of work and marriage. For God blesses still. Amen.

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Book Reviews

ERT (2004) 28:1, 86-88

**Beyond Fragmentation:
Integrating Mission and
Theological Education**

Bernard Ott.

Regnum Studies in Mission.
Oxford, UK: Regnum Books
International, 2001.

ISBN: 1-870345-14-2.

Paper xvii + 316 pp + 66 pp
appendices.

*Reviewed by Robert Ferris, Columbia
International University, Columbia SC,
USA.*

In *Beyond Fragmentation*, Bernard Ott sets out 'to synthesise the global and ecumenical paradigm shifts in mission theology, as well as theological education and apply these to evangelical theological colleges and seminaries in Germany and German-speaking Switzerland' (p. 7). As

Academic Dean of Theologisches Seminar Bienenberg, one of thirty-six evangelical Bible schools in Germany and Switzerland which make up the Konferenz bibeltreuer Ausbildungsstätten (KBA), he is well positioned to do so.

Technical flaws in publication of the book's extensive index (16 double-column pages) are regrettable. Page numbers provided in the index are off by up to six after the first fifty pages. This is a pity, since accurate referencing would make the book more usable. Furthermore, the survey reported in Ott's research was done in 1994-95, despite the book's 2001 publication date.

Ott finds the roots of the KBA schools 'in the context of pietism, neo-pietism, and evangelicalism, or those strands of Christianity in which the Bible, personal spirituality and missionary zeal were kept alive' (291). In recent decades, however, the schools have also been shaped by contact with North American missionar-

ies, by international congresses on the Church and mission, and by response to developments within the World Council of Churches.

Ott selects David Bosch and Edward Farley to guide his assessment of German Bible schools. He identifies three areas in which Bosch ‘transcends’ the prevailing categories in mission studies: (1) ‘in the context of crisis and change, (2) in dialogue with the wider ecumenical community, and (3) within the context of an integral paradigm of mission’ (143).

Ott’s analysis of Bosch leads to thirty-eight criteria which he uses to assess the state of mission studies in the KBA schools. The result is a ringing indictment of the German Bible school movement from a ‘radical evangelical’ perspective.

Throughout this section, Peter Beyerhaus’s substantial contribution to German evangelicalism is viewed negatively. His ‘apocalyptic apologetic’ approach and his condemnation of the World Council of Churches’ movement away from the exclusivity of the gospel is denounced as polarizing. The Frankfort Declaration, authored by Beyerhaus and a foundational document of the German Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelikaler Missionen, epitomizes this stance which Ott rues.

Next Ott takes up ‘a paradigm shift’ in the curricula and methods of theological education. Appealing to Bosch, he advocates moving mission studies ‘from the margin to the centre’ of theological education (208). Andragogy indicates a move from ‘institution-oriented theological education’ to ‘people- and context-oriented theological education’ (215). Finally, Ott sees in Edward Farley’s *Theologia* a move from ‘deductive transmission of knowledge’ to ‘integration of theory and practice’ (229) and from fragmentation to holism (237). It is rather amazing that Ott makes no use of Farley’s 1988 book, *The Fragility of*

Knowledge, in which Farley carries forward the analysis begun in *Theologia*.

When the KBA schools are examined for evidence of this new paradigm, again they come up short. While I do not share Ott’s concern over the theological stance of the KBA schools, his assessment of curricular and methodological issues rings true. Furthermore, the curricular fragmentation he noted at the end of the last decade has been exacerbated by a recent rush among KBA schools to offer British university degrees. Ott identifies (254, 267, 271), but seems to miss, the importance of professional development for faculty and deans as an instrument of change. In my experience, most who serve in our Bible schools are committed to teaching with excellence and are willing to adopt more effective methods if shown how.

Ott, however, perceives a common source of failure among the KBA schools, both in mission studies and in pedagogy, i.e. their resistance to ‘a hermeneutical and epistemological shift’ from ‘truth as a given set of propositional doctrinal statements’ to ‘truth as something which has to be discovered in a particular context’ (274). There can be no doubt that such resistance exists, but the direction he points and the model he proposes are biblically unsatisfying.

It is not feasible here to frame a response to the epistemological challenge Ott has raised. I offer, however, a few questions for clarification, reflection, and dialogue:

1. Is absolute truth assumed or denied? Is biblical authorial intent assumed or denied, and if assumed is it normative? Is authorial intent accessible through a grammatical-historical hermeneutic?
2. Is it not the task of the Christian in every age and every culture to articulate the biblical message—the faith once delivered to the saints—in language and

categories that resonate in that context? Is it not also the task of the Christian in every age and in every culture to provide a biblical response to questions arising out of that context? Why should any Christian be called to choose between an authoritative revelation in scripture and a contextually responsive message?

3. How do calls to 'contextual theologizing,' to reconsidering the role of proclamation and faith in salvation, and to postulating divine revelatory presence in non-Christian religions (310) find footing in scripture? If a culture rejects an absolutist epistemology, is not the Christian called to correct rather than to accommodate this error? Is not biblical truth itself at stake?

Ott's book deserves to be read by theological educators from all nations. The issues raised and the agenda advanced need to be addressed biblically. In the end he concludes that the faculties of the KBA schools 'do not really accept two basic realities of our time: (a) the reality that 'the traditional western concept of truth has collapsed'; and (b) the reality of the diversity of the church in its ecumenical and global scope living in various cultural contexts' (292).

We might hope they acknowledge the first only as an aspect of our missiological task and the second as a challenge to learn to speak biblical truth into each context. Thankfully, most already do.

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The Gospel of Mark

Donald H. Juel.

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

ISBN 0687008492

Pb 200pp

Reviewed by Garry Harris, South Australia.

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the Gospel of Mark.

Recognized as the first record of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection, it repeatedly confronts us with the disciples' slowness to perceive Jesus as Messiah. In this eminently readable volume Donald Juel, the Richard J. Dearborn Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, declares his interest in rhetorical criticism. He notes that innumerable insights emerge only when one is preparing to present an oral interpretation of Mark's Gospel (p. 17).

This observation resonates with the understanding that early Christian literature was read aloud in the church setting. Juel notes: 'Biblical literature was written to be heard. The majority of people in the New Testament world could not read. Their access to literature was through the oral medium' (p. 48).

The rationale for a rhetorical-critical approach to synoptic study is that the fundamental intent of the Gospels was to persuade an audience to believe particular claims about Jesus (p. 29). Since rhetoric is the study of the means of persuasion it seems curious, to this writer, that the Gospels have only recently been exposed to this critical methodology. This puzzle is compounded, given the pervasive impact of Greek culture upon the New Testament.

The author contends that some perception of the impact of the text upon the reader is imperative if a thorough understanding of the text is to be achieved. He states: 'Analyzing Mark's Gospel should include reflection on what happens "on this side of the text" as well as what is "in" the story or "behind" it' (p. 29). He continues: 'One of the things a rhetorical approach highlights is the relationship among three "characters" in any act of communication...the speaker...the speech...and the audience' (pp. 32-33).

Sensitive that Christendom has unjustly

caricatured Pharisaism, Juel attempts to redress the imbalance. He signals the Pharisees' importance in Mark and asserts: 'They appear...as religious people concerned with Jesus' apparent carelessness about ritual matters' (p. 67). He also suggests that reference to Jesus' verbal exchanges with the Pharisees as 'controversy stories' injects an overly negative tone to the events since vigorous legal debate was the norm in that cultural context (pp. 68-9).

Alluding to both the tearing of the Heavens and the Temple curtain, this study notes that both function as protective barriers sparing humanity from the direct presence of God. It then infers that the incarnation may also be seen as fulfilling this purpose. The statement is made: 'Jesus is the one in whom God is present in a world previously screened from that presence' (pp. 80-81).

Jesus' proclivity for crossing boundaries is also given extensive consideration. While observant of Mosaic Law, Jesus crosses boundaries in pursuit of God's will. He even crosses the most sacrosanct boundary between creator and creature and is frequently charged and finally convicted of blasphemy (pp. 97-99). In a later chapter entitled 'Plundering Satan's House', Juel explains that the imagery of kingdoms and households suggests not merely ruling, but alludes to the spatial dimension of that rule. This accounts for the tenacity with which entrenched political and religious leaders struggled to maintain governance of their turf (p. 109).

The author acknowledges his indebtedness to Jehoiachim Jeremias' immense contribution to the study of the parables and asserts: 'What they mean is what they meant to the original author and audience.... This assumes there is a correct reading of a parable and that it is to be found in Jesus' intention' (p. 120).

This statement is of paramount importance since it reaffirms the necessity of attempting to rigorously reconstruct the original meaning of the text thereby rescuing it from the netherworld of purely subjective interpretation.

Juel also highlights problems in attempting to arrive at the original meaning of a parable. He notes that the translation of spoken Aramaic to written Greek is occasionally ambiguous and cites the parable in Matthew that compares the kingdom of heaven to a wedding banquet. This same passage is rendered in Luke as a story about a great dinner. The difficulty is apparent when the author explains that the same Aramaic word can be translated as either wedding banquet or great dinner (p. 120).

In discussing the events surrounding Jesus' death, the author comments on the discernible slowing in the pace of activity. The characteristic 'immediately' of the Markan narrative slows to movements that are plotted by the day and hour. Names and place-names suddenly assume great importance and one cannot mistake the care with which the events are being recalled (p. 139).

This study suggests that the frequent use of Hebrew scripture and the phrase '...as it has been written' is a rhetorical device employed to persuade the audience that Jesus' death is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. It then notes that the significance of these events assume profound dimension when we recognize that Mark is depicting the action from God's perspective (p. 144).

Chapter eight, of this ten-chapter volume, embarks upon a theological appraisal of the death of Jesus. The assertion of 1 Corinthians 15:3, 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures' is seen as code for according to God's will since the scriptures emanate from God. Jesus'

Gethsemane prayer is also seen as supporting this contention.

Finally, the author discusses 'The Messianic Secret' (pp. 177ff). He also suggests that there are several secrets in Mark's Gospel. Alluding to Jesus' insistence that the disciples have been given the secret of the kingdom of God, he notes: 'Precisely what the secret constitutes, however, is left unspecified' (p. 180).

This substantial work will be a valuable addition to academic reading lists in Synoptic Studies. It rightly assumes that the Gospel was written for audible consumption and advocates the reading of Mark with the ear rather than the eye. This new approach will doubtless unlock significant insights for those prepared to revisit the Gospel and explore it from yet another fascinating perspective.

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Beyond the Ordinary: Spirituality for Church Leaders

**Ben Campbell Johnson and
Andrew Dreiteer**

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2001
ISBN 0-8028-4773-0
Pb viii+168

Reviewed by David Parker,
Editor, *Evangelical Review of Theology*

'Beyond the ordinary' is not very helpful as a title in indicating the content and thrust of this helpful and stimulating book. Something like 'A fresh look at basic spirituality' would be more suitable to express the authors' vision of spirituality as 'lived intimacy with God' which involves 'devotion to the attitudes and practices that shape and flow from a life with God'. The book is written against the background of church life that is pre-occupied by institutional matters, pro-

grams and professionalism. It has in mind pastors who lack understanding of spiritual life, who are unable to model intimacy with God for their congregations and who are without the experience necessary to help their people find the answers they are seeking in these days of a bewildering variety of spiritual options.

Ben Campbell Johnson is professor-emeritus of Christian spirituality, Columbia Theological Seminary, and Andrew Dreiteer is Director of Spiritual Formation at Claremont School of Theology. With this teaching background, they provide practical suggestions and theoretical explanations which successfully avoid the sometimes sterile or even repulsive stereotypes that often plague this type of endeavour. They set out in a non-threatening manner a means of helping pastoral and lay leaders to become genuine 'revolutionaries' on 'the cutting edge' who are ready and able to 'embrace fresh visions, contemplate life from a changed perspective, and step forward with breathtaking expectations'.

Much of the material is in essence traditional, such as using Scripture to hear the voice of God, gaining a vision of God's purpose for the church and people, being a spiritual guide for the people, finding refreshment in God's presence and resting confidently and joyously in him. But it is presented in a structure and form which shows the dynamics and value of those disciplines, rather than presenting them in a preachy, declarative tone. Plenty of examples from individuals, questions for personal and group reflection and suggestions for journaling all help to open up this material and display its practical application and relevance.

The authors also engage honestly with contemporary issues. For example, there is a good analysis of the problems caused by an extremely or exclusively academic

theological education which fails to give prospective pastors any concept of their role as spiritual guides. This problem is aggravated by the fact that typically students are given only a critical approach to Scripture. Hence there is extensive discussion of various approaches to Scripture which emphasize its ability 'to deeply nourish our lives with God' as it 'brings us into transformative intimacy with God'. This use of the Bible is presented in such a way as to avoid sacrificing intellectual credibility, thereby displaying an open, comprehensive and integrative approach which is a prominent feature of the book

This positive and affirmative aspect of the authors' vision arises in part from their fundamental belief that Christian spirituality has a threefold dimension— sacramental, activist and mystical. 'A vital spirituality for today finds its grounding in Christian tradition, is celebrated in the sacraments, and expresses itself in Christ-shaped deeds. It is a spirituality that seeks to follow wherever the Spirit leads, and it openly embraces the Spirit and seeks the living Christ to dwell in us and manifest itself in all our actions'. This kind of spirituality, they affirm, 'grounded in baptism, informed by the example of Jesus and empowered by his living Presence will gush forth as spiritual power in the life and ministry of church leaders. This power from God is nothing less than the manifestation of the indwelling presence of Christ working through us. The more transparent we are to the Presence of God, the more fully the power of God flows through our thoughts, feelings, and activities, and the more authentically we minister.'

This, the authors emphasize, makes the difference, in fact it is a 'stark contrast', between 'professional leadership and a leadership of passion and vision' because

this power is a matter of convictions, it flows through our relationships, often unconsciously, it has a healing effect and most of all, is transformative: 'When the Spirit works through us, people see new visions, hope breaks into their lives, and a new sense of the meaning of their lives emerges through their relationship with us.'

An important aspect of the outworking of this spirituality, and one that needs highlighting, is the idea that 'spiritually nourishing experiences and encounters with God' take place not only in the traditional areas of the personal use of Scripture, prayer and spiritual direction, but also in the day by day work of ministry, including preaching, congregational care and even administration. Here they draw on Eugene Peterson's trigonometrical metaphor in which he distinguishes between the 'angles' which give shape to the ministry which is represented by the 'lines'.

However, it is a virtue of this book that the authors emphasize the value of 'working the lines' as much as 'the angles', and so finding spiritual enrichment in the very acts of ministry themselves. This is a powerful idea, permeating the whole book, making it potentially very useful for church leaders who may often be disillusioned by the sheer load and difficulty of the work they face. Assuming that 'today's leaders cannot afford to give a routine, task-oriented performance' in their ministry, the authors emphasize 'the importance of prayer and mission being held in tension, the crucial role of Scripture in the formation of our lives, ... and the importance of vision, myth, and discernment in the spiritual life of the church'. thus producing a resource that should be valuable to all who are serious about a well founded, thoughtful and yet practical spirituality.

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**The Ideal Seminary: Pursuing
Excellence in Theological
Education**

by **Carnegie Samuel Calian**

Louisville/London: Westminster John
Knox, 2002

ISBN 0-664-22266-8

Pb pp 137 Index

Reviewed by David Parker,
Editor, *Evangelical Review of Theology*

Writing out of twenty years' experience as president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, the author compresses into a remarkably brief compass insightful analysis of many of the most pressing issues in theological education, and does so in a way that it is engaging and easily accessible. There are discussion starters at the end of each of the twelve chapters, but more than that, the chapters are full of searching questions and the exposition invariably homes in on key contemporary concerns in each of the three areas of seminary life that it treats—institutional challenges, program/curriculum matters and the student body.

Thus, his depiction of various leadership styles in a seminary context should provide useful ideas for seminary leaders, and his discussion of the problems of call, potential loss of faith and prayer should be of assistance to any student or counsellor. Faculty will be interested in his views of tenure, academic freedom and the need for them to 'become students again' while students and academics can reflect on his claim that intellectual and professional tensions in our learning are resolved by realizing that our 'journey of faith is also a journey for truth.'

Administrators will be fascinated with his account of how his own seminary turned around its financial problems, by focusing

on endowments, named chairs and a positive image with the stakeholders, although they will need to take seriously his warning that the experience cannot necessarily be cloned at other institutions.

Dr Calian is obviously worried about the parochial outlook and clerical model of ministerial training that have tended to dominate seminaries in the past. He also wants to see prayer at the heart of the life of the institution. He feels that 'forgiveness' ought to be the 'encompassing theme' of the curriculum because he sees the seminary as essentially 'faith shaping community'. So he writes, 'The seminary is more than a sanctuary for scholarship; it is also a laboratory for the practice of forgiveness', thus stressing the responsibility of the seminary and churches to acquire 'the spirit of John 3:16' and 'rediscover a deeper gratitude for God's love that was so completely displayed on the cross'.

This means that the informal 'ungraded curriculum' is ultimately more important than the formal program. Perhaps in his desire to promote the renewal of the seminary's role, he goes too far in stressing this aspect and in suggesting that the church should be more like the seminary by paying more attention to discipline, study and engagement; similarly, the seminary as a community of faith, forgiveness and prayer with a broad rather than a clerical appeal and a fundamental missional orientation should be more like the church. The danger is that both church and seminary become all things to all people and so lose their respective distinctiveness and purpose.

However, Dr Calian provides plenty of emphasis on the central purpose of the seminary in 'interpreting and integrating biblically informed faith to human experience' and stresses that its main task is

'specifically to educate and develop learned leadership among the people of God'. Thus there is every need for leaders, faculty, students and constituency to strive for excellence in all the traditional ways, ensuring the highest academic, educational, administrative and personal standards. Yet he insists that it is the quality of the relationships forming the community based on forgiveness that 'is the most outstanding factor that makes any school "tops" for the students who go there'.

Fundamentally, this is a revolutionary stance because in the author's view, the 'ideal seminary' will 'model renewal for the churches by constantly reinventing' itself 'as the Spirit of God leads us through charted and uncharted waters'. 'As an enthused learning community for God, we wish to graduate leaders for our churches who can become change agents who worship God more truly, energised by their theological studies, stimulated by new learning methodologies and innovative service to the community'. Dr Calian has provided a personal vision and testimony in a stimulating form that could well function as a workbook for seminaries, churches and accreditation agencies as well providing guidance at the personal level.

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**The Abolition of the Laity:
Vocation, Work and Ministry in
Biblical Perspective**

R. Paul Stevens

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999.

ISBN 0-8536.4982-0

Pb vii + 289 pp.

*Reviewed by Gordon Preece,
Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia*

Paul Stevens, a Canadian teaching at Regent College, is, along with Australian

Robert Banks, perhaps today's leading advocate and practitioner of a theology of the whole people of God. I was tempted to say 'laity' for the sake of brevity, but Stevens has come to believe, since his earlier *Liberating the Laity* (IVP, 1985), that such brevity betrays God's people, hence the title.

Stevens' book is divided into three parts. 'Part I: A People without 'Laity and Clergy'' spells out the thesis of the provocative title. Adapting Lincoln's famous 'of, by and for the people' to theology, Stevens firstly depicts a non-clerical biblical theology that breaks down many of our crippling dualisms: that between clergy and laity, neither being New Testament terms, and that of gathered and scattered life, Sunday and Monday, each privileging the former part of the pair. He is not anti-clerical, engaging in a contest for church space, as many lay theologies and ministries are, but opens up the whole of everyday life to the whole people of God as a field for ministry and vocation. Secondly, a theology for God's people moves 'beyond unapplied theology'. All theology is meant to be practical theology, not just a Cinderella subject by that name. Stevens seeks to restore the Cinderella to her rightful place if theology is to once again reclaim its integrating role as servant of God's servants. He aims to overcome the split between university and monastery, academy and church, intellect and spirituality, theory and practice so destructive to Christian life. Such a theology by God's people will move beyond academic theology to everyday theology, reflecting on the routines of work, play and family, not just the extremes and edges of life.

Stevens helpfully contrasts the implicit clericalism of the OT where the Spirit came occasionally upon specific prophets, priests and kings with the radical univer-

salising of the Spirit's presence and empowering for all believers as prophets, priests and kings in the NT. Sadly, no sooner was the people of God liberated at Pentecost than the early church fathers disempowered them through a reversion to OT, and pagan sacred and secular models of clerical leadership. Clericalization proceeded apace in what we could call 'the taming of the pew', to be partially turned back by Luther's rediscovery of the 'priesthood of all believers'. However, Protestant focus on soteriology (salvation) not ecclesiology (church), the preacher replacing the priest, minimal structural change, 19th century adoption of the Catholic seminary system, and ordination without equivalent recognition of lay vocation in society, has left the Reformation incomplete.

Stevens recaptures a sense of being one people by transcending the old clerical/anti-clerical divide. He goes to the root of the problem by correcting false hierarchical images of God, church and leadership with more trinitarian and communal ones.

Part II 'Summoned and Equipped by God', takes a chapter to look at each of calling, work and ministry. Stevens carefully distinguishes personal (to work, family and civil roles), Christian (to conversion, community and Christ-like character) and human (to communion, community building and co-creativity) vocations in a biblically and pastorally balanced treatment that avoids what Os Guinness (*The Call*) describes as the Catholic hierarchical heresy of only some Christians, monks and priests, having a Christian or personal calling and the Protestant secularized heresy of 'calling' as just a personal vocation or job.

In 'Doing the Lord's Work' Stevens helpfully looks at historical changes in work before examining God's trinitarian work

and then developing criteria for good work that is good for the world, neighbour and us. In examining ministry Stevens typically starts with a biblical overview of ministry or service before setting it in the context of trinitarian service or ministry. 'Jesus, in the Father, through the Spirit' is our model of ministry (p. 142). Stevens sees no biblical warrant for a specific existential call or ordination to professional ministry, stressing instead the congregation's recognition of godly character in leaders. 'Ministry is from God, to God and of God'. It is by the whole people of God, in word and deed, church and world.

Part III 'For the Life of the World', firstly recaptures the biblical doctrine of the prophethood, priesthood and kingship of all believers. Stevens quotes the Hebrews principle, 'the deeper we enter into the sanctuary the further we will penetrate the world'. 'Priesthood connotes the interiority of the whole people of God, royalty and prophethood connote the exteriority of every member ministry' (p.176). This corrects both elitist Catholic and Protestant individualised distortions. No individual, except Christ embodies all three perfectly. Nor does any leadership team, although hopefully they will have a balance of these roles and see that all three operate within the church and model how Christians should operate in the world. Stevens cites banking executive Sandra Herron's helpful description of this threefold ministry at work in her industry: 'The prophet helping organizations discover what God intends for them to become, the priest caring for people and serving as a model, and the king acting as a faithful steward of people and resources' (p. 189).

Stevens secondly develops the notion of mission by seeing Christian mission and vocation as the fulfilment of the human

vocation to relate to God, people and land. Reorienting the church towards equipping for mission, not only overseas, but in the local community and workplace is essential if we are to finally discard the chains of Christendom. To engage in mission however, will meet resistance from the powers of creation gone their own way, tyrannising over rather than serving humanity. Stevens avoids the extremes of seeing the powers in a secularised way as only social structures or of spiritualising them so they are seen only as angelic or supernatural beings. Again a biblical theology of the powers as created, fallen and redeemed provides the way forward. This enables a discerning, multi-faceted response to supernatural powers and social structures avoiding the extremes of charisma or secular activism. The final victory over the evil powers will also include the transformation of our work or works 'in the Lord' which will not be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58), but be purified and made fit for 'a new heavens and new earth'. This gives new significance to those toiling in 'so-called secular work: the arts, education, business and politics' (p. 237). Stevens concludes with an encouragement to live holistically in praise, practice and passion.

I find it difficult to criticize Stevens' *magnum opus* for it is now *the* text on the ministry of God's people, gathered and scattered, Sunday and Monday. It is profoundly biblical, thoroughly trinitarian and eminently practical. It is written with a lifetime's passion and great clarity. Its user and 'lay' friendliness (to use that dreaded term), is aided by helpful diagrams and graphs and apt discussion questions. It is ideal for small group study. The only quibble is perhaps with the title of the English edition which on first hearing has an anti-lay sound which Stevens certainly does not intend. 'The Abolition of the Clergy' or

'Beyond Clericalism' might have been closer to Stevens' intention. Nonetheless, this is a magnificent climax to a lifetime of ministry spent advocating for and equipping the whole people of God for mission and ministry beyond Sunday.

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The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament (2nd Edition)

By William J. Dumbrell

Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002
ISBN 0-8010-2532-X Pb
347pp bibliography, index

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The Faith of Israel is a theological survey of the Old Testament written by a reputable Old Testament biblical scholar and theologian. It reflects unquestionably the thoughts of a seasoned professor and is therefore able to provide helpful assistance to both the specialist and the novice to aid them in understanding the faith of Israel. With its theological themes, the expositor will appreciate what Dumbrell has done to draw out important motifs, while the beginner will be grateful for the simple and lucid presentation of the content of each OT book. Dumbrell follows the Hebrew canon, dividing Old Testament books into Law, Prophets and Writings. This is in line with his idea that the Law is the gospel message of the Old Testament, while the Prophets and the Writings elaborate on the message of life in the land, prophetic eschatology and guidance for Israel's covenant. The author presents the content of each book by its theological framework and important themes and relates it to the whole Old Testament. As a biblical

exegete and theologian, Dumbrell has proved through his writing that there is consistent meaning in the texts if one carefully reads and expounds them. He charts a path through the structures given in each biblical book. Important theological issues and overarching theology are illustrated through his thoughtful presentation, such as 'theocracy' (p. 79), 'holy-war motif' (p. 193) and 'prophetic eschatology' (pp. 189, 200, 206). To his credit, he discusses some intertextual exegesis of the earlier theological themes (pp. 167, 225, 227). He is correct in stating that Jeremiah uses 'Israel' as a theological term (p. 150).

The author is to be applauded for his wide knowledge of Ancient Near Eastern cultures and its relevant issues in relation to Old Testament texts. As a scholar who does not settle for easy answers, he cites and discusses many essential parallel Ancient Near Eastern backgrounds. Some important Hebrew words are transliterated and discussed in his presentation. The reviewer notes Dumbrell's preference for Hebrew words such as *hesed* (pp. 36, 175, 212, 274-77) and *mishpat* (pp. 119, 264).

Since the first publication in 1988, the author has continued to find insights and ideas, leading to the necessity of a second edition. Generally, for this revision, there is a helpful inclusion of references to the work of representative scholars for each of the books. For example, Dumbrell cites Hess' significant work on the importance of boundary descriptions with his studies on Amarna tablets in the discussion of the book of Joshua (p. 74). In the relationship between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, he relies on Kelly and accepts the current understanding that both works are separated through the contribution of Japhet and Williamson (pp. 323-24). Dumbrell interacts with scholarship,

but he does not blindly follow other opinions. Thus, in the discussion in of the language of covenant inauguration, he argues against Williamson for his misunderstanding of a Hebrew verb (*'br*, p. 63).

A small difference from the first edition is found in the omission of the basic outlines of each book; also eliminated are the chiasmic structures in the book of Jonah. Dumbrell has also re-written some the material to make his presentation more readable. In the second edition, a more exhaustive bibliography is given. Another significant difference can be seen in the subtitle of the book. Whereas the general title, *The Faith of Israel*, is used in the second edition, its subtitle, *A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*, truly reflects what the author is doing to bring out many theological themes in his presentation. The use of the subtitle affirms the current trend of the OT scholarship of producing theological survey such as the works of Bruce C. Birch, Walter Brueggemann, Terence E. Fretheim, and David L. Petersen, 1999, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, Abingdon Press).

The author is to be commended for linking some Old Testament texts with New Testament themes into his presentation. This seems to be the interest of many readers of OT survey. It would serve the public better if Dumbrell had included a scriptural index to allow readers to find the text under discussion. In his interest to write a unified, and progressive theme for Old Testament, more charts ought to be given to present this connection.

So, aside from a few small drawbacks, this book is well worth the cost for the reader who is looking for a good theological survey of the Old Testament.

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