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Editorial: ‘All Our Gods Have Failed’

‘All our gods have failed’. These poignant words come at the end of an editorial in a British newspaper, *The Sunday Independent*, commenting on the mood of acute moral self-examination and despair that has gripped the nation in the wake of the abduction and murder of a two-year old boy in Liverpool. Children have been murdered before. What makes this case so horrifying is that the child was led away almost from his mother’s side in a busy shopping centre in broad daylight, the event was captured on a security video, and those arrested and charged with the crime are two ten-year old children. The tragedy has thrown up a barrage of questions about the social malaise which allows such things to happen. The most profoundly disturbing symptom is the alienation and violence of growing sections of the nation’s youth, and the apparent inability of the police, judiciary and social services to stem the tide of criminality which has now infected even the pre-teenage years.

I trust our international readers will forgive this focusing on a British issue, but I think it illustrates a much wider problem in modern culture. The expression ‘moral vacuum’ has been tossed around in the media as an attempt to describe the apparent refusal of some sections of society to recognise, let alone live by, basic moral standards, and the apparent inability of the rest of society to inculcate or enforce them. The phrase is apt, but means more than the *absence* of morality. The whole point about a vacuum is that it does not just happen, for nature, as we all know, ‘abhors a vacuum’. Vacuums have to be created. You get a vacuum when you deliberately suck out the air inside an object. It has to be pumped out and sealed out. Western culture for the past 200 years has been systematically and deliberately sucking out the transcendent from its public heart and core. Os Guinness has pointed out that ‘glory’ in Hebrew literally means weight, substance, reality. So a society which excludes the glory of the living God becomes increasingly ‘weightless’. It becomes hollowed out, empty, drained of reality and meaning, first spiritually, then morally, and finally in every area of social and personal life (*cf.* Rom. 1:21–32). That’s the kind of vacuum Britain is discovering. Moral revulsion and national conscience send us to the larder of values, but when we get there the cupboard is bare.

We thought we could have value-free facts in the great secular, scientific enterprise, and we thought we could hold on to our values while denying them any basis in fact—the fact of God and the truths of objective revelation. The cleavage in our post-Enlightenment culture between the realm of alleged objective facts and public truth on the one hand and private beliefs and moral or religious values on the other hand has become so deep that we see them as totally unrelated even in a single individual. Thus we are capable of saying that it shouldn’t matter if public figures, royalty, government ministers, senior legal figures, *etc*., are found, for example, to have committed adultery; their private lives do not affect their public credibility or integrity. But if a man can lie to

his wife in word and deed in the context of the strongest personal commitment he has made, on what grounds can we trust his veracity or integrity in his public words and deeds? We are governed by those who wink at the breaking of the seventh commandment, collude by inaction over those who announce in advance their intention of breaking national laws related to the fourth, respond with callous procrastination over gross injustices done through the breaking of the ninth in court by those most trusted to uphold it, positively encourage the breaking of the tenth, and then profess to find it inexplicable that the generation below them trample on the fifth, sixth and eighth. We not merely float in a moral vacuum, but also flounder in moral schizophrenia.

Part of the process of creating that moral and spiritual vacuum has been the marginalizing of the church. God is a leisure activity, or the merely symbolic veneer of something called 'our heritage'. The *Independent* article has a huge cartoon at its head, in which on one side rats and worms are devouring a loaf called 'country pride', and on the other side the sun is shining on a typical English village church, surrounded by birds and flowers. The imagery is powerful. The church is not itself reality. It is merely the idyllic symbolism of a nostalgic myth. Reality is the loaf. And the loaf is mouldy and crumbling (*cf.* Isaiah 55:1–2). So if we look for ultimate nourishment to our national pride in itself, even by sticking national flags on or in the church, it will fail us (and already has) as totally as the other false gods we can no longer trust.

For of course the article's conclusion speaks more truly than it knows. The words were doubtless intended ironically and without literal intent. But biblical Christians know them to be the sober truth. Human nature abhors a vacuum too, and the vacuum left by the explusion of the living God and his truth from our culture has been filled with a succession of other gods and their lies (Rom. 1:25). The article selects two failed gods of British post-war social history—the collectivist values of the union-dominated Labour era, followed by the individualist values of the Thatcherite 1980s. The former mercifully never reached the levels of destructiveness that its extreme forms wrought in the communist world, but the latter has proved to be an acid dissolving almost every social value in its way. One commentator (Jeremy Seabrook, in *The New Statesman*) calls it 'an individualism so extreme that not only have the institutions of solidarity been all but destroyed, but the most precious bondings and associations between people have also been severely strained, the ties of kinship, blood and love'—the very things that God designed his covenant community, his 'light to the nations', to preserve and protect. 'There is no such thing as society', said Mrs Thatcher—a philosophy which makes it curiously inconsistent for her standard-bearers now to complain about the 'anti-social' activities of the young. They can hardly be 'anti-' something that doesn't exist, or in any case something they have been effectively robbed of—a meaningful sense of a society they can belong and contribute to.

Idolatry means treating as of ultimate worth anything which is not God, and looking to it for solutions, salvation or security. It has taken myriad forms, ever since Cain built a city and started a family to find a substitute security in the land of restlessness and the loss of God's presence. The greatest idol of all is the human self, and our recent history shows us the diabolical consequences of self-interest and self-worship—whether of the collective self or the individual self. Both idolatries made great promises and called for great sacrifice (as is also the nature or idols, *cf.* Bob Goudzwaard, *Idols of Our Time*, IVP, 1984). Both had a kind of utopian salvation language, an infinitely deferrable economic

eschatology, but ‘now, the Thatcher promise of salvation through individual self-reliance and self-discipline is exposed as another failure, socially as well as economically’.

The worst thing about idols, as the Hebrew scriptures so tirelessly point out, is that they are utterly useless when you need them most (Jer. 2:28). On the contrary, they become a burden to their very worshippers who have to pay the cost of carrying them (Isa. 46:1–2). What a price Britain and other western nations are now paying for the accumulated idolatries of generations. The acute suffering of a Liverpool family merely concentrates in the agony of a few the outworkings of a malaise of national judgement that none can entirely evade. The church and its theologians must not fail to rise to the need and the *kairos* of the national mood. The prophetic voice must be heard that puts the claims of the gospel back into the public arena. The prophetic sign must be seen that makes visible in the life of Christian communities and families an alternative bread, the offer of the only saving God. ‘If we feel utter despair, it is because we see no new promise’, concludes the *Independent* article. Israel in exile thought the same, until Ezekiel stood in a valley full of dry bones and witnessed the resurrecting power of the spirit of Yahweh. ‘All our gods have failed’. Of course they have. And we must pray and preach that this becomes not merely a figure of speech, but an acknowledgement of reality and a liturgy of repentance.

Chris Wright

Gaia spirituality: a Christian critique

Loren Wilkinson

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We are witnessing the emergence of a new metaphor for the earth and our relationship to it: that is, the picture of the planet as a self-organizing, self-regulating and, to some degree, a self-conscious entity. Many refer to that entity as sacred, and call it by the name of 'Gaia', ancient Greek goddess of the earth.

The idea of Gaia, the sacred earth, was particularly evident at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. And increasingly, 'Gaia' thinking provides a framework for both political and religious discussion. Politically, because it seems to provide a biological rationale for 'thinking globally'; religiously, because the idea seems to fit both with Eastern monism (the idea that all is one) and with various kinds of New and Old World paganism.

I am going to discuss three of the dimensions of Gaia thought – scientific, religious, and feminist – and then suggest some of the ways Christians might respond to this complex and important idea.

The science of 'Gaia'

The Gaia hypothesis is first of all a serious scientific theory, suggested in the mid '70s in several papers by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, and seriously set forth in 1979 by Lovelock in his book *Gaia: A New Look at Life.* A mark of the seriousness with which the theory has been taken is that the American Geophysical Union, an international association of geologists and geochemists, devoted its entire 1988 conference to discussion of the idea. At that meeting, though the idea received vigorous criticism, it received equally vigorous support, and continues as a fertile hypothesis linking the concerns of those who study the earth with the concerns of those who study its life.

In Lovelock's words, the Gaia hypothesis states that 'the biosphere is a self-regulating entity with the capacity to keep our planet healthy by controlling the chemical and physical environment'.[1] Lynn Margulis, the 'mother' of the theory, summed it up with admirable precision for that 1988 conference. In her words:

> The Gaia Hypothesis states that the Earth's surface conditions are regulated by the activities of life. Specifically, the Earth's atmosphere is maintained far from chemical equilibrium with respect to its composition of reactive gases, oxidation-reduction state, alkalinity-acidity, albedo, and temperature. This environmental maintenance is effected by the growth and metabolic activities of the sum of the organisms, *i.e.*, the biota. The hypothesis implies that were life to be eliminated, the surface conditions on earth would revert to those interpolated for a planet between Mars and Venus. Although the detailed mechanisms of Earth surface control are poorly understood, they must involve interactions between approximately thirty million species of organisms.[2]

James Lovelock was working for NASA in the early '60s when he stumbled on the foundation of the Gaia idea. He was involved in designing the experiments which would test the Martian soil and atmosphere for signs of life. His conclusion – before the *Viking* spacecraft ever set out – was that even an earthbound analysis of the Martian atmosphere precludes the likelihood of life there. For it (like the atmosphere of Venus) is in a state of chemical equilibrium. All of the possible chemical reactions have already taken place. In particular, there is little free oxygen: it already exists in stable combination with other elements, particularly carbon – hence the very high (95%) CO_2 content. On the other hand, observes Lovelock:

> The earth, our living Earth, is quite anomalous; its atmosphere has the reducing gases and oxidizing gases all coexisting – and this is a most unstable situation. It is almost as if we were breathing the sort of air which is the premixed gas that goes into a furnace or into an internal combustion engine. Ours is a really strange planet.[3]

His conclusion: the gases of the earth's atmosphere *are* 'pre-mixed' – by living things themselves – in order to sustain life.

Apart from pointing out the earth's weird atmospheric chemistry, Lovelock makes his point in many ways. The most significant of these is evidence that, though the sun's radiation output has increased by some 30% over the time of life on the planet, the earth's surface temperature has remained roughly the same over that same period. Manipulated by living things, the unstable chemistry of the earth's atmosphere has provided a stable environment. Thus the planet seems to function as a single living entity, to which Lovelock (at the suggestion of his neighbour, novelist William Golding) gave the name 'Gaia'.

Lovelock's analysis of planetary atmosphere provides the most dramatic evidence for the theory of planetary self-regulation, but the work of Lynn Margulis, a microbiologist, has furnished a clearer indication of the process. Margulis was an early champion of the idea – now largely accepted – that the components of the cell were once independently existing bacteria which are co-operating for survival. This principal of symbiosis on the microbial level is evident not only in the cell. Margulis' conclusions are based largely on extensive research into the functioning of symbiotic bacterial systems – such as the mats of different kinds of algae that form on saline lakes and work together to create a livable environment for each of them. The result has been the discovery of a principle of co-operation for the benefit of the whole which Margulis and Lovelock have extended to the whole planet.

The science of the Gaia hypothesis thus comes from the very large and the very small: at the large end, the atmosphere of the whole planet is constituted in a way which strongly indicates that its mixture of gases is being maintained 'artificially' by living things themselves. And at the small end, we find in every living cell evidence of mutually beneficial co-operation for the control of the environment. At the planetary end we see a planet which is regulated; at the cellular end we see mechanisms of symbiosis which show how such environment-preserving regulation can take place.

A variety of consequences and controversies has resulted from the scientific Gaia theory. Here are a few of them.

1. Certainly one of the largest consequences of the idea is a growing public awareness of the chemistry of the atmosphere, and how it is maintained. Thus, the idea of the tropical rainforest as 'the lungs of the planet', an awareness of the 'greenhouse effect', and a concern for the effect of CFC gases on the ozone layer are all direct or indirect consequences of the Lovelock/Margulis hypothesis of a dynamic interrelationship between life and the planet where it finds itself. There are few examples in recent history of a scientific idea invading popular culture with such pervasive force.

2. A controversial aspect of the Gaia hypothesis is ironic: it is the idea that Gaia can take care of herself. As Lewis Thomas (who

was an early — and continuing — supporter of the hypothesis) puts it:

> ... it is illusion to think there is anything fragile about the life of the earth; surely this is the toughest membrane imaginable in the universe, opaque to probability, impermeable to death. We are the delicate part, transient and vulnerable as cilia.[4]

Such a conviction of life's toughness is not entirely welcome to everyone in the environmental movement, some of whom have spoken as though current environmental crises threaten the very existence of life on the planet. Central to the scientific Gaia idea, however, is evidence that it thrives on crisis, which speeds up the evolutionary process of adaptation. Both Lovelock and Margulis are regularly accused of being too sanguine about the ability of the earth to absorb any and all environmental deprivation.

3. Another of the controversies accompanying the Gaia theory is endemic in the words used to discuss it. Its defenders find it easy to slip into language which seems to attribute purpose or intention to the planet-sized entity 'Gaia': 'Gaia adjusts ... adapts ... compensates ...', *etc.* It is quite possible to avoid such implication of intention (we regularly use such words about organisms and ecosystems). But the Gaia hypothesis brings to the surface a teleological oddness central to evolutionary theory. How can the random, purposeless processes which are said to underlie the process of evolution achieve such exquisitely purposeful results? This argument has been going on for a long time; the Gaia hypothesis simply brings it to a focus. Careful proponents of the hypothesis are careful to avoid language of purpose and intent. But it is very difficult, even for them. In the preface to the second (1987) edition of his book, Lovelock says, 'Occasionally it has been difficult, without excessive circumlocution, to avoid talking of Gaia as if she were known to be sentient. This is meant no more seriously than is the appellation "she" when given to a ship by those who sail in her.'[5]

But for the less careful culture at large, the idea of the sentience of Gaia has proved to be irresistible, hence the massive religious dimension of the Gaia concept.

4. This leads me to a final consequence of the theory. The scientific Gaia hypothesis has been overwhelmed by the sheer poetic and religious power of the idea. Anticipating such overtones, Lovelock was at first reluctant to give the name of the goddess 'Gaia' to the planetary organism he was describing. Margulis has been more outspoken: 'The religious overtones of Gaia make me sick', she said in 1986. But despite these misgivings by the 'parents' of the hypothesis, an extraordinarily potent idea has been unleashed. As anthropologist Mary Catherine Bteson puts it, 'Gaia is the supersystem.... It is intellectually irresistible.'

So while scientists continue to debate the details of the scientific Gaia hypothesis, 'Gaia' has irrevocably become a part of the religious longings and language of our culture. Which takes me to the second major reason for the spread of the Gaia idea: the desperate spiritual climate of our time.

The religion of Gaia

The Global Forum in Rio was opened by a ceremony marking the arrival of a replica Viking ship, carrying messages from the world's children. The ship was named *Gaia.* And in her remarks at that opening ceremony Hanne Strong, wife of the conference organizer, Maurice, suggested that the day of the ship's arrival, Tuesday, be changed to 'Gaia-day', substituting 'Gaia', goddess of the earth, for Tiw, Norse god of war. Both Strong's suggestion and the name of the ship suggest the growing force of the name and image of 'Gaia'. And pictures of 'Gaia' from space have become, in the last couple of decades, something like a religious icon.

As a unifying religious symbol, 'Gaia' fills voids left by the very nature of modern life. One such void comes from our lack of a feeling of community, our excessive individualism. And another is our growing secularity — our determination to live as if there were no God, and hence no purpose to life other than what we give it.

The result has been the large-scale reaction sometimes called 'post-modernism'. In response to the individualism, we have looked for connections, relationships, communities. And in their response to secularization — the elimination of the sacred — many have made a determined effort in the last couple of decades to recover a spiritual dimension.

A 'Gaia' spirituality seems to meet both needs. For the toxic effects of individualism it provides a feeling of participation with all living things. For the consequences of secularization it provides the conviction that the whole which those things make up is sacred, divine. (Some add the idea that we humans are the consciousness of the earth itself — the place where the Gaian divinity becomes self-reflective.)

A good outline of the content of the new Gaia religion is contained in the one-page declaration issued by 'The Sacred Earth Conference' to UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) participants. Many religious leaders met on the Sunday before the earth summit officially opened, and issued a declaration which includes the following statements:

> ... The ecological crisis is a symptom of the spiritual crisis of the human being, resulting from ignorance.
>
> ... We must therefore transform our attitudes and values, and adopt a renewed respect for the superior law of Divine Nature.
>
> ... Individuals and governments need to evolve 'Earth Ethics' with a deeply spiritual orientation or the earth will cleanse itself of all destructive force.
>
> ... We believe that the universe is sacred because all is one.

The last statement expresses a key premise of some sort of Gaia religion — that is, the idea that *all is one.* The notion seems to be supported by ecology in general, the study of connections between living things and their environment. John Muir, at the turn of the century, observed, 'When you try to pick out anything by itself you find it hitched to everything else on the planet'. The scientific Gaia hypothesis gives substance to that statement. It seems to justify what Aldous Huxley called 'the perennial philosophy': monism, the notion that all is one, and that separateness is only illusion.

Accompanying these post-modern pressures towards feelings of connectedness and the sacred is a pragmatic push, evident in the curious declaration that individuals and governments need to 'evolve "earth ethics" '. There is a growing realization that we need an ethical base for action — and an acknowledgment that ethics may require religion. Thus as Maurice Strong — the secretary general, guiding genius and chief visionary behind the UNCED conference — observed at the beginning of the Rio conference, 'any workable decisions made at UNCED will have to have deep moral, spiritual and ethical roots if they are to be successfully implemented'.

A religion based on Gaia, the earth goddess, seems to provide such roots. But it is a religion which grows from the leaves down, and not from the roots upward, hence the pragmatic element: it is an ethic searching for a religion. Thus it bears a curious resemblance to the institution of emperor-worship in the late-Roman empire, which was adopted because something, anything, was needed to preserve the empire. In a similar way, various Gaia-nurturing religions are being proposed today, not because they are true, but because they might help preserve the earth. We will return to this pragmatic question when we consider Christian responses. I want first to consider another major aspect of Gaian thought today: that is, its connection with feminism.

The feminism of Gaia

'Ecofeminism' as a term was first used in 1974 by French writer François d'Eaubonne. Though the term and the movement it describes is modern, some would argue that the attitude it describes is as ancient as humanity: an attitude of care and nurture which the environmental threats of our time have helped to reawaken. An important anthology of ecofeminist writing, *Reweaving the World*, is dedicated to Rachel Carson, whose *Silent Spring* is widely acknowledged as one of the first works to alert the general public to ecological problems. Many see Carson as a prototypical ecofeminist, and the dedication reflects some of the ecofeminist movement's main themes:

> Men of science have believed for hundreds of years that naming preceded owning, that owning preceded using, and that using naturally preceded using up ... Rachel Carson thought that loving the world was what science had to be about.[6]

'It is not coincidental', say the editors of *Reweaving the World*, 'that a woman was the first to respond both emotionally and scientifically to the wanton human domination of the natural world.'

One of the most striking things about the Global Forum in Rio was the presence and voice of women. (This is still in marked contrast to UNCED itself, where debate and decisions were still made mainly by dark-suited men.) But at the non-governmental Forum, women clearly had a leading role. The importance of women in the environment/development discussion is indicated by the fact that clearly the best-organized, best-attended, and most lively of the 35 tents of the Forum was the one called simply, and significantly, 'Planeta Femea', 'Feminine Planet'. The sign behind the stage announced this as 'World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet'. Though Planeta Femea did not make abundant use of the word 'Gaia', its central symbol — an abstract painting of a woman nursing a child, in which woman and child together depicted the round earth — certainly evoked the nurturing planet goddess idea.

Here then are some of the principles of ecofeminism pertinent to understanding Gaia spirituality. We may or may not agree with them, but they have become axiomatic to many women and men, and hence a powerful support to Gaian spirituality.

1. Women are uniquely responsible for nurturing life

Perhaps the most basic and least controversial aspect of ecofeminism is a recognition that women are, both by tradition and biology, more involved in care-taking and nurturing. Women first carry children in their own body, then nourish them with their own milk. Many have noted the parallel between a woman's carrying and nursing a baby, and Gaia's supporting of its millions of interlinked species. This affirmation of a basis for nurturing in the very nature of a woman's physiology transforms an earlier feminist principle — a rejection of the Freudian notion that biology is destiny. In ecofeminism that limitation becomes something positive: an acceptance of the fact that woman's more immediate involvement in the cycles of fertility, birth and nurture give both a greater understanding of those cycles in nature, and a greater responsibility to embody such care in human institutions and practices. Indeed, 'nature' is related to the word for 'natality' and 'nativity' — giving birth.

2. Patriarchal attitudes and institutions produce environmental degradation

Along with this ecofeminist recovery of the importance of maternal care-taking has come the hypothesis that male domination — patriarchy — has been the main cause of environmental degradation. But prior to that patriarchy (so the theory goes) there flourished a primal, non-patriarchal culture which worshipped the goddess Nature. Riane Eisler describes such a culture in an article titled, significantly, 'The Gaia Tradition and the Partnership Future':

> ... this reverence for the life-giving and life-sustaining powers of the Earth was rooted in a social structure where women and 'feminine' values such as caring, compassion, and non-violence were not subordinate to men and the so-called masculine values of conquest and domination. Rather the life-giving powers incarnated in women's bodies were given the highest social value.[7]

The ecological crisis, according to this argument, is the inevitable result of the violent replacement of societies dominated by female values with war-like 'dominator' societies, characterized by male values. The most destructive of these cultures, so the argument goes, have been those rooted in Judaism and Christianity, which worship a transcendent and detached male God.

3. For its own health and that of the earth, humanity needs to recover goddess worship

The rejection of patriarchal religion is accompanied by a call to worship the goddess of nature, the earth, one of whose names is Gaia. Riane Eisler declares this need for goddess worship in a kind of manifesto:

> Let us reaffirm our ancient covenant, our sacred bond with our Mother, the goddess of nature and spirituality. Let us renounce the worship of angry gods wielding thunderbolts or swords.[8]

More important even than this assertion of Gaia's peacefulness is the notion of Gaia's proximity. The male God — specifically the Christian God — is seen as distant, aloof, detached, transcendent. Indeed, Susan Griffin calls the idea of the divine as immanent

> a concept foreign to those raised in Judeo-Christianity ... The view that we've grown up with is that the divine and matter are separate and that matter is really dangerous ... Women, being closer to the earth, listened to serpents, made people eat apples, and made them commit other sins.[9]

Thus the new feminine spirituality affirms not a transcendent God, but an immanent goddess — a goddess who *is* the earth. As Charlene Spretnak puts it:

> ... We would not have been interested in 'Yahweh with a skirt', a distant, detached, domineering godhead who happened to be female. What was cosmologically wholesome and healing was the discovery of the Divine as immanent in and around us.[10]

Indeed, the appeal of the immanent Gaia goddess is that we are a part of her. Says Starhawk, a self-proclaimed white witch and chief liturgist of ecofeminism:

> The Goddess has infinite aspects and thousands of names — She is the reality behind many metaphors. She *is* reality, the manifest deity, omnipresent in all life, in each of us. The Goddess is not separate from the world — she *is* the world, and all things in it: moon, sun, earth, star, stone, seed, flowing river, wind, wave, leaf and branch, bud and blossom, fang and claw, woman and man.[11]

Or, more to the point: 'The symbolism of the Goddess is not a parallel structure to the symbolism of God the Father. The Goddess does not rule the world; she *is* the world.'

Gaia worship thus is harmonious not only with nature magic, but also with Hinduism in its various old and new manifestations: *Atman* is *Brahman*. All is one and all is divine; separateness is illusion; go deeply into yourself and you will discover your divinity.

Some Christian responses

Christians have tended to regard this complex Gaia movement either as a train to get aboard (shedding extra theological baggage as needed) or as a satanic force to be resisted at all costs. Both attitudes were evident at the recent UN conference. Typical of the first response were the Christians who sang 'Were you there when they crucified the earth?' outside the UNCED gates, but made no mention of Christ, since the usual Christian claim to salvation only through Christ would be divisive. The inclusive spirit is caught well by Matthew Fox, whose 'cosmic Christ', he says unabashedly, is the earth itself, 'the principle which connects'. The first section of *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* could be labelled, in his words, 'The Crucifixion of Mother Earth (which is also the crucifixion of Jesus Christ)'.

There is a strong pressure on many Christians to let the inclusiveness of the Gaia hypothesis compromise their belief in the uniqueness and particularity of the incarnation. As Matthew Fox puts it:

> There is only one great underground river, though there are numerous wells into it — Buddhist wells and Taoist wells, Native American wells and Christian wells, Islamic wells and Judaic wells.[12]

One ostensibly Christian response to Gaia spirituality seems to be to regard the earth as the universal Christ, the main source of salvation and enlightenment, of which the historical Jesus is simply one manifestation. One group has published a series of 'new icons' which portray Christ in various guises — as an Apache warrior, for example, or as an East Indian woman. In one of these a female Christ points at the 'Venus of Willendorf' — now widely thought to be an early sculptural depiction of the earth goddess — and says, 'I am She — Know me better'. Not surprisingly, many Christians reject not only this response, but also *any* attempt to revalue the long-devalued earth, as a kind of pantheism — an invitation to witchcraft.

What is a more orthodox Christian response to the Gaia movement? Much wisdom has been spoken on the subject in the last few years. Let me apply some of these insights to particular features of Gaian thought.

1. On the science of Gaia

Christians should fully welcome the more thoughtful and comprehensive science which recognizes (with Lovelock) in the anomalous chemistry of the earth's atmosphere an evidence of fittedness for life which far transcends accepted notions of planetary formation. And we can only welcome also Margulis' understanding that co-operation – symbiosis – plays a much more central role in creation than does competition. The resulting picture of a harmonious creation is much more in keeping with the goodness pronounced in Genesis 1, and with the intimate particularity of the creator's care described in (for example) Psalm 104.

But Christians must continue to challenge the inconsistent and one-dimensional analysis which describes the mechanisms of biological change as though they were only random processes. Such an analysis makes the fatal error, common to reductionistic science, of conveniently bracketing out the person making the analysis. Yet it is only that person, in his or her faith, commitment and passion, which makes the explanation possible. The problem is not the evidence of gradual change and interconnection; the problem is rather a kind of analysis which robs the concept of 'evidence' of any force.

When we acknowledge the centrality of the personal consciousness, commitment and responsibility in which all science is rooted, we have no choice but to challenge the impersonal reductionism in which scientific discussion of the Gaia hypothesis is usually carried on.[14] We must challenge as well attempts by contemporary ideologues to turn evidence of Gaian interconnections into some other sort of monism, whether political, feminist, or Hindu/spiritual.

For central to the Gaia hypothesis – indeed, to any kind of science – is an inescapable duality which belies all declarations that 'all is one'. That duality is basic to consciousness, and all attempts to reject as patriarchal aberrations the feeling of separateness basic to consciousness must necessarily fail. For if one were to make a successful argument that humans were simply a part of the random cosmic process, one would have to include that argument itself as equally random, and hence not binding.

There *is* a fundamental duality, and it is between the universe and its creator. True, the more we learn about the earth the more we learn about its interconnections, as well as its connections (and our own) to the rest of the cosmos. We are made of the ashes of stars, we share DNA with all living things, we breathe the exhalations of plants. Thus we need to hear the 'new story' of the cosmos that cosmologists and biologists are telling us.

But they are *telling* it to us. Central to that story is language: which of course implies personhood, communication, by word, between selves. And the only thing which makes sense of that 'new story' is the old story we are reminded of in John's Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word . . . Through him all things were made . . . without him nothing was made . . . The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us.'

For of course creation – and the Creator – is the crucial thing excluded from the Gaia hypothesis. An understanding of the Creator in a fully Trinitarian sense – the Creator Spirit described in Psalm 104; the biblical 'cosmic Christ' described in the NT – enables us to understand the science of Gaia. And especially, it enables us to make sense out of those indications of purpose and intention which defenders of the hypothesis go to such great lengths to avoid.

2. On the religion of Gaia

It is, as we have seen, largely an attempt to provide a basis for an ethic of care, stewardship, and responsible use. Yet such an ethic is impossible (as we have seen) if we are only and merely one more part of the process. The attempts to root an environmental ethic in a religion which says that all is one, and that we human beings are simply part of an evolving cosmic process, are doomed to failure. This failure is indicated in occasional 'deep ecology' criticisms of the concept of 'stewardship'. It is arrogant, so this argument goes, to speak of human stewardship, for one part of a web or process can't be steward of the other part. Precisely. Yet it is only human beings (not whales, rain forests, or ozone layers) who hold conferences about the fate of the whole process. Once again: ultimately an ethic implies a Creator – a Creator to whom, in all our organic rootedness, we are nevertheless given the privilege of responsibility, and hence the inescapable possibility of stewardship.

3. On the feminism of Gaia

We must acknowledge the truth of much of what is said about the arrogance of a science and technology rooted in concern only for power, rather than in love and nurture. It is not so clear, however, that such arrogant misuse of power is exclusively patriarchal or male. It seems rather to be a human characteristic, rooted in sin (a concept absent from Gaian discussion – recall that the 'Sacred Earth Declaration' quoted above says simply that we are ignorant).

What is clear is that in the relationship between God and creation which biblical revelation unfolds for us, God is not distant, detached and domineering. The intimacy of the Creator to creation is evident throughout Scripture: 'He makes springs pour water into the ravines . . . He makes grass for the cattle . . . When you send your Spirit they [all creatures] are created, and you renew the face of the earth' (Ps. 104). Or, as in the distinctly feminine image of Acts 17 (in which Paul quotes with approval a stoic poet): 'In him we live and move and have our being.'

Indeed, the greatness of the Creator, his power and might, are seen in his closeness to creation, not his distance. The 19th-century Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins makes this point in a striking way:

> God is so deeply present to everything . . . that it would be impossible for him but for his infinity not to be identified with them, or, from the other side, impossible but for his infinity so to be present to them . . . a being so intimately present as God is to other things would be identified with them were it not for God's infinity or were it not for God's infinity he could not be so intimately present to things.[15]

Such an immanence and intimacy is at the farthest remove from pantheism. Yet in the Creator's immense closeness we find great comfort – not that we are God, or part of God, but rather that God, wholly *other* than us, is yet (in Augustine's words) nearer to us than we are to ourselves.

Why, if such womb-like intimacy describes God's relationship to creation, does the Bible so overwhelmingly use masculine imagery to describe that relationship? There is obviously more to be said here than we have time to say. But one tentative answer might be that the masculine imagery of the Bible is used precisely to keep us from making the easy and obvious mistake of thinking that our relationship to God is the same as our relationship to the earth. The Canadian novelist Rudy Weibe makes an excellent observation here:

> . . . when man speaks of 'God as Mother' her acts usually become so closely identified with nature – the physical world everywhere – that he forgets the imageness and begins to think the words as physical actuality. For a person to say: 'All is brought forth from the womb of God' is so close to what actually happens every minute in animal nature that he starts acting out copulation and birthing and begins to think he's God while he's doing it. . . .[16]

The closeness of God the Creator is most evident to us in Jesus, who, being the divine Word in whom all things hold together, the transcendent Lord of the universe, nevertheless '. . . made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant'. We need to recapture this biblical understanding of God as Creator and Redeemer. It is an ancient one in the church. Irenaeus, in the first century, declared:

> For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God: and this is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, existing in this world, and who, in an invisible manner, contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things; and therefore He came to His own in a visible manner, and was made flesh, and hung upon the tree, that He might sum up all things in Himself.[17]

In such a theological framework we can perhaps recognize Gaia for what it is – an indication of the intimate care of our Creator and

Redeemer. And rooted in such a soil, we can begin to speak of care of the earth as an inseparable part of righteousness.

For an earthkeeping ethic cannot simply be invented, then propped up by pragmatically useful religions like much of the emerging Gaian 'spirituality'. It must rather be one of the fruits of a life rooted (like that of the righteous person described in Psalm 1) in the life-giving streams of the law of the Lord, the law which we encounter in Jesus, the Word made flesh, in whom 'all things' (including Gaia, the earth) hold together.

[1]James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. xii.

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[5]Lovelock, *Gaia*, p. xii.

[6]Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein (eds.), *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), p. iii.

[7]Eisler, in *Reweaving*.

[8]*Ibid*., p. 34.

[9]Susan Griffin, 'Curves Along the Road', in *Reweaving the World*, p. 87.

[10]Charlene Spretnak, 'Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering', in *Reweaving the World*, p. 5.

[11]Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, in Mary Olsen Kelly (ed.), *The Fireside Treasury of Light* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 329.

[12]Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (Harper and Row, 1988), p. 230.

[13]This assumption was reflected in the name of another of the well-attended tents at the Global Forum — 'Terra Christa'. It was filled with a variety of techniques for achieving enlightenment, wholeness, and oneness with the earth: and it was clearly the earth, Gaia, who was the 'Christa', the anointed one.

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The image of God in humanity: a biblical-psychological perspective

R. Ward Wilson and Craig L. Blomberg

In 1984, Dr Ward Wilson and Dr Craig Blomberg, our N. American Reviews Editor, team-taught a course at Palm Beach Atlantic College in Florida entitled 'The Image of God in Humanity: Biblical and Psychological Perspectives'. In 1986, Ward presented his own perspective in two papers presented to the American Scientific Affiliation meetings at Houghton College in New York. In 1988, he refined them further in a presentation to the International Congress on Christian Counseling held in Atlanta. In the months just before his death from leukemia in 1991, he had written a preface, two chapters, and three appendices to what he had hoped would be a book entitled God's Image, Our Potential and Eternal Living. *He had projected several additional chapters for which he left no extensive notes. Because of Dr Wilson's earlier ministry as a staff member for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, his lifelong commitment to students preparing for ministry, and his special interest in international and cross-cultural studies,*[1] *it is particularly appropriate that this synthesis of his perspectives,*[2] *edited by Craig Blomberg, should be finally published in* Themelios.

Theologians and biblical scholars continue to debate the nature of the image of God in humanity.[3] The rapid rise of Christian counselling and psychology has produced numerous attempts to integrate the observations of the social sciences with biblical exegesis and systematic theology. Recent studies suggest the possibility of emerging lines of agreement concerning certain aspects of human nature.[4] But in the light of diverse theological and social-psychological views of the essence of humanity, those who would integrate biblical and social-scientific insights need a more refined picture of the qualities comprising the *imago Dei* within humans. This article briefly surveys several of the classic views of the image of God, highlights relevant scriptural data, proposes a view which is both moral and interpersonal, unpacks this perspective in the light of Exodus 34:6-7, notes correspondences with psychological and cultural-anthropological research and Christian apologetics, and suggests several practical applications of the theory for persons active in Christian ministry.

Influential views of the image of God

The view that God's image in humanity reflects certain physical characteristics has dominated various periods of church history but is now almost universally abandoned, inasmuch as Scripture, apart from anthropomorphic language, consistently denies bodily attributes to God the Father.[5] The first occurrence of the expression 'the image of God' appears in Genesis 1:26a, leading others to look in the immediate context of that verse for clues to its content. In 1:26b, God gives man dominion over all other creatures, which has suggested that God's image could be humanity's vice-regency over creation.[6] 1:27 describes the creation of male and female; perhaps the image involves our sexuality, our separation into two genders, or our need for interpersonal fellowship or community.[7] But although these concepts are the ones most immediately juxtaposed with the creation of people in God's image, nothing in the text explicitly links them together or identifies them as what the *imago* comprises.

The influential views of Augustine and Aquinas anticipate some of the approaches of modern psychology. Augustine supported a triune capability to know God by means of memory, understanding, and will, within the soul's rationality and comparable to God's Trinity.[8] Aquinas pictured our *imago* in three ways: (a) a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; (b) our imperfect habits of knowing and loving God by conformity with grace; and (c) acting perfectly in knowing God, according to the likeness of his glory.[9] Reinhold Niebuhr held to this rationalistic tradition by identifying the image of God with our power of self-transcendence, which enlarges the reason's conceptions.[10] But all these views depend less on exegesis than on philosophy, as they try to answer the question of what humans and God have in common that sets them apart from the rest of created life. The contemporary evangelical theologians Lewis and Demarest identify metaphysical, intellectual, moral, emotional, volitional and relational aspects of the image,[11] but it is not clear that

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Scripture uses all five of these categories with specific reference to the *imago Dei*, even if all are important dimensions of the human person.

The Reformers, especially Luther and Calvin, followed the lead of the NT, comparing especially Colossians 3:10 with Ephesians 4:24, and advocated righteousness and holiness as the essence of God's image.[12] This understandably led to the conviction that such an image was severely corrupted if not entirely effaced by the fall, but that it is in the process of being restored through the new life in Christ on which believers embark.[13] Yet Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 both seem to require that God's image, to some significant degree, remains in all humans even after the fall. In addition, moral awareness (knowledge of good and evil) is precisely what the creation narratives suggest Adam and Eve did not have, prior to the fall.[14] Still, being in a state of moral perfection is not the same as consciousness of that perfection or of the means to maintain it. And the Reformers' views can be rehabilitated by speaking not of righteousness *per se*, but of the capacity for righteous or holy living (or for a personal relationship with God), which remains after the fall, but which requires redemption for its actualization.

Numerous other proposals have been made but none has commanded as widespread attention as these.[15] The major problem with the biblical data is that nowhere does Scripture directly provide a definition or description of what the image of God involves. More indirectly, however, there are important clues. We believe the most crucial text, usually overlooked in discussions on God's image, is Exodus 33:12–34:7, particularly 34:6-7.

A moral-interpersonal perspective

After the incident of the golden calf, Moses despairs of his ability to continue to lead the children of Israel. He asks God for reassurance that Yahweh's personal presence will continue to guide him and requests further insight into the nature of that presence. Specifically, he asks to know God's ways (Ex. 33:13) and to experience God's glory (33:18). In response, Yahweh promises to 'cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence' (v. 19). Four key terms in these verses include God's 'ways', 'glory', 'goodness' and 'name'. The meaning of each of these terms in Hebrew more generally, and in this context specifically, translated into the language of modern psychology, suggests that Moses is enquiring about God's motives ('ways') and character traits ('glory'). Yahweh replies by declaring that he will reveal his value system ('goodness') and personality profile ('name').[16]

The Exodus narrative continues with God warning Moses that he cannot see him directly (his 'face'), but that he will see him indirectly ('his back') and that this will occur 'when my glory passes by' (33:22). 34:6-7 then describes the actual event: 'And he passed in front of Moses. . . .' Here unfolds the revelation of God's glory. But it is unclear if Moses saw anything or not; what is related is that God *spoke* to him, itemizing crucial attributes of Yahweh. God's glory is thus defined in terms of cardinal qualities, specifically those which later Christian theology would call his 'communicable attributes', that is, those which humans can share – compassion, graciousness, slowness to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, forgiveness and justice.[17]

The centrality of this revelation of Yahweh to Moses is demonstrated by the fact that direct quotations of this personality profile recur in eight other OT passages (Nu. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Nah. 1:3). Still other texts contain probable allusions to Exodus 34:6-7, most notably Jeremiah 9:23-24. Exodus 20:5-6, in turn, with its rationale for the second commandment of the decalogue, may supply the background for part of Yahweh's disclosure formula here.[18]

If the OT links the glory of God with his communicable attributes, the NT associates his glory with his image. The most crucial passage here is 2 Corinthians 3:7–4:6, which is clearly expounding Exodus 33–34.[19] In the context of a contrast between the fading glory of the old dispensation and the enduring glory of the new, Paul delineates the transformation which believers are undergoing: 'And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect [NIV mg: 'contemplate'] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit' (3:18). But the word translated 'likeness' here is *eikōn*, more commonly rendered 'image', and the very word used by the LXX to translate the Hebrew *ṣelem* ('image') in Genesis 1:26. Again in 2 Corinthians 4:4, 'glory' and 'image' are closely associated in the phrase, 'the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God'. That glory and image are at least partially interchangeable seems to be confirmed by 4:6, which contains the parallel phrase, 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ'. Instead of the order A–B–C, we have A–C–B, but it seems self-evident that 'the light of the gospel' and 'the light of the knowledge' are synonymous. So too, therefore, at least in this context, must be 'the glory of Christ' and 'the face of Christ', both referring to the clear revelation of his being, and 'the image of God' and 'the glory of God', referring to those attributes of his character which are increasingly replicated in regenerated humans.[20]

With the Reformers, it is fair to speak of this image of God as 'moral'; with more recent theologies, it is important to point out that all the elements are 'relational' or interpersonal in nature. As the image of God is increasingly perfected in redeemed humanity, persons are enabled not only to relate more adequately to God but also to other people. A variety of other biblical data supports this moral-interpersonal interpretation of God's image. Although the plural pronouns of the Genesis 1 creation narrative remain an enigma, a defensible case can still be mounted for seeing them as evidence for some form of plurality or interpersonal communion within the Godhead.[21] Leviticus 19:1 commands God's people to be holy as he is holy; the laws of the 'holiness code' which this verse introduces focus primarily on treating one another with compassion, love, forgiveness and justice. Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount echo the structure of Leviticus 19:1: 'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt. 5:48). But Luke's version of this saying replaces 'perfect' with 'merciful' (Lk. 6:36). Is it coincidental that the first item in the list of Yahweh's character traits in Exodus 34:6 is a term for compassion or mercy? Is Luke employing 'synecdoche' (a part for the whole) to refer to the entire list of qualities of the image of God in Exodus 34:6-7? Might Jesus have, in fact, expounded all of them, whereas Luke, adopting characteristic practices of abbreviation, mentions only the first on the list?[22] Surely such a list would admirably define the type of perfection or maturity ('the greater righteousness') which the Sermon on the Mount/Plain as a whole requires.

We have already alluded to the Reformers' combination of Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24. The former passage speaks explicitly of believers being recreated in the image *(eikōn)* of God. The parallel passage in Ephesians does not employ the term 'image' but refers instead to being created 'to be like God in true righteousness and holiness'. But if the image is that which believers and God share, then to be like God must be to have that image fully restored. And the Ephesians text explicitly identifies 'righteousness and holiness'. But if the image is that which believers and God share, then to be like God must be to have that image fully restored. And the Ephesians text explicitly identifies 'righteousness and holiness' (or wholesomeness, or health) as central to that image. Moral and interpersonal categories are clearly present.[23] But we may utilize Colossians further. Not only does Colossians 3:10 link up with Ephesians, it also links back with 1:15. It is because of Christ, who is 'the image of the invisible God', that we are enabled to be redeemed and recreated.[24] Then, as we read on from Colossians 3:10, we see that the renewal of the knowledge of God in the image of our Creator is a moral and interpersonal knowledge, in which we clothe ourselves 'with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience' (v. 12). We 'bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances' we may have against one another (v. 13). This list of virtues is strikingly similar to Exodus 34:6-7.

One additional scriptural link between God's image and his glory as reflected in humans appears in 1 Corinthians 11:7: 'A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.' In the first clause 'image' and 'glory' seem roughly synonymous. The second clause suggests a distinction, however, which explains the absence of a second use of 'image'. Woman is not the image of man; she, like man, is equally created in God's image (Gn. 1:27). But just as Paul develops a play on the word 'head' throughout 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, comparing and contrasting one's anatomical 'head' with one's metaphorical 'head' (Christ for the man and the man for the woman), so too he seems to shift in this verse from using 'glory' as synonymous with 'image' to using it to mean something like 'honour'.[25]

In fact, the rainbow of character traits revealed in Exodus 34:6-7 finds echoes in virtually every major NT listing of cardinal attributes incumbent for believers. Most significant among these

are James 3:17 on the wisdom that comes from above ('pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere'), the catalogue of Christian virtues in 2 Peter 1:5-7 ('faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love'), explicitly in the context of receiving what we need for life and godliness 'through our knowledge of him who called us by his own *glory* and *goodness*' (v. 3; recall Ex. 33:18-19), and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 ('love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'). Ephesians 4:1-16 suggests that the two foundational qualities of Christian living are Christ-like character and Spirit-led unity. John 20:22-23 highlights the importance of forgiveness in the post-resurrection ministry of Christ and his disciples, using language which harks back to Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, in which Jesus empowered first Peter and then all the twelve to bind and loose ('forgive or not forgive', based on the presence or absence of repentance, as in Ex. 34:7) according to the divine will. Even Paul's favourite term for spiritual gifts (*charismata*) suggests the idea of 'gracious gifts', echoing the element of graciousness in the personality profile of God's image revealed at Sinai.

In sum, Exodus 34:6-7 is probably not an exhaustive list of the qualities which comprise the image that God creates and recreates in humans. Doubtless, it must be supplemented by the attributes added in catalogues of Christian character traits such as those noted above. But it provides an excellent foundation for further analysis and corroborates a moral-interpersonal interpretation of the *imago Dei*. An elaboration of the qualities itemized in these two verses in light of contemporary psychological understanding proves especially fruitful.

An analysis of the *imago* qualities

Merciful[26]

A merciful person is not only emotionally compassionate but also active at meeting others' needs. These include the primary needs which psychologists stress as well as higher-level needs according to hierarchies of self-actualization. Mercy assumes that the care-giver is wise and sensitive to others' conditions and willing to make interpersonal contact and to use one's resources to meet needs. The merciful person will also try to influence others who could help the needy. God's compassion or mercy shines in a variety of places in the Bible. The Psalms sparkle with requests and praises for God's mercy. David, for example, pleads for this mercy to wipe out his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (Ps. 51:1). In 25:10 David sings, 'All the paths of Yahweh are merciful and faithful to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies'. Central to the worship services of Israel was the mercy seat. Speaking to Cornelius, Peter focused on Jesus' mercy in describing how he 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38). The gospels picture him feeding the poor, healing the sick, exorcising the oppressed, refreshing the weary, befriending sinners, and providing love and safety to his followers.

Interestingly, the attribute of mercy is curvilinear (or 'U-shaped') in its value and effectiveness. That is to say, too much mercy is as detrimental as too little. In Japanese culture, for example, this is proverbial ('too much is as too little'). It is unhealthy to lavish others with many goods and benefits, in effect telling an individual, 'You aren't a good provider'. Some recipients of such extravagance have committed suicide. Western cultures, too, react against spoiled children (and adults) or those who waste public monies from welfare or the dole. Early believers were to work in order to show mercy to the needy, including themselves ('If a person is not willing to work, he or she shall not eat' — 2 Thes. 3:10), yet they were not to refuse charity when they were in need (Acts 2:45). In fact, five of the seven *imago* attributes listed in Exodus 34:6-7 are curvilinear: mercy, graciousness, slowness to anger, preserving love, forgiveness and justice. There are times when it is appropriate to withhold each of these. But two of the seven are linear in their value and effectiveness: self-giving love and truthfulness. Is it coincidental that these are the only two which the text specifically describes as that which God 'abounds in' — that is, overflowing and unlimited in nature?

Gracious[27]

Gracious persons are interpersonally warm and relaxing — people feel at home in their presence. The Psalmist praises the advantages of a person who is gracious and compassionate in right relationships out of respect for Yahweh (Ps. 112:4-5). Jesus' beneficial manner of dealing with friend, enquirer and critic helped those who accepted his style of relationship to develop a sense of fulfilment. So impressed was John, who labelled himself Jesus' beloved disciple, with Jesus' graciousness, that he focused on it and truthfulness as Jesus' primary character traits (*eikon* — Jn. 1:14, 17). But we also find a curvilinear relation between psychological health and the amount of graciousness one experiences. We need an adequate amount of truth-supported grace to survive. Without interpersonal warmth, infants may experience marasmus (a wasting away of the body) and even die, or children may develop psychological dwarfism and other extreme problems. At the other end of the spectrum, some subcultures train people to be hypocritical in face-to-face graciousness, but critical or dishonest behind one's back. This is often manifest in sickly-sweet, hollow, or supercilious hospitality.

Slow to anger[28]

God is very patient with people about their sin, giving time for repentance and change. He predicted the destruction of many cities (*e.g.* Tyre and Jerusalem) and empires (*e.g.* Assyria and Babylon) generations before judgment fell, trying to get them to do what they knew was good according to God's image in them. The prophet Jonah predicted Nineveh's destruction for their evil, but when they repented God relented, explaining to Jonah that he was a 'gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in self-giving love . . .' (Jon. 4:2). Jesus was patient with his disciples, correcting but not firing them, when they thought he was running the kingdom wrongly (Lk. 9:51-55; Mt. 16:21-27).

The best parents are patient with their developing children. Intergenerational conflicts increase when parents continually condemn their youth, who recognize parental hypocrisy and condemn back (contrast Lk. 6:37). Many forces in modern culture press for instant change; Paul stresses that it is tribulation which will develop the persevering patience that adds to our Christ-likeness and results in mature character (Rom. 5:3-5). We must remember, however, that God eventually does get angry at unrepented and unreconciled evil, so he cannot show complete unconditional positive regard as Carl Rogers and other clinicians have advocated.[29] There must be legal and psychological limits to clients' behaviour. Similarly, parents need to set limits for unhealthy behaviour at appropriate levels for different stages of child development.

Abounding in self-giving love[30]

Instead of unconditional positive regard, Yahweh is rich and overflowing (abounding) with self-giving love. This steadfast loving-kindness is one of the two second-order clusters of all of Yahweh's goodness, tying with justice the right combination of need-meeting experiences. God continued to love Israel in spite of her sin, even when he had to punish her periodically — which also reflected his self-giving love. In Proverbs God's wisdom is personified and declares, 'I love those who love me, and those who diligently seek me will find me' (Pr. 8:17). Jesus' *agapē* love included loving his disciples and family even when he was being denied justice, ridiculed, tortured and executed. By his teaching and actions, Jesus included loving his enemies even unto death.

Whereas God's mercy, graciousness and patience are curvilinear in relation to healthfulness, self-giving love (like the next attribute to be discussed, truthfulness) is linearly related to wholesomeness. The maximum amount of steadfast loving-kindness is the most healthy. This love builds up all our created potential through its stabilizing and maturing processes. It involves sacrificial concern, warm-hearted kindness, active neighbourliness, health-creating friendship and dirt-cleaning servanthood. As believers more clearly model Jesus' love, they will actively include their enemies in their love-circle. This maximal love, however, does not spoil children nor take away the loved ones' responsibility to develop their own potentials.

Abounding in truthfulness[31]

Just like self-giving love, the maximum amount of truthfulness, faithfulness or integrity is the most healthy. God is rich and overflowing with interpersonal honesty. He is faithful to his commitments in creation and salvation. His fulfilled prophecies demonstrate that we can trust him concerning predictions which have not yet come to pass. What is more, we can trust in his promise to complete the development and full restoration of the *imago* in the lives of believers (Rom. 8:28-29). All of the believer's experiences should combine together to promote goodness,

because those he knew ahead of time would believe in him he predestined to be conformed to his Son's image. This is not a rigid, blind determinism, for God works his will through free human agents. The primary observers of Jesus' life were impressed with his personal veracity. As noted above, John was especially cognizant of Jesus' truthfulness — cognitively and morally (Jn. 1:14, 17).

We, however, often yield to cultural pressures, motivated by personal narcissistic choices, and so we lie and fake wholesome living. Some cultures train people to lie more cleverly than do others, even though persons in all cultures want to know the truth. In Japan, for example, there is much lying, especially to superiors, under the guise of courteously telling them what they want to hear, even as the ideal remains to know someone truly or 'inwardly'. Codes of honour among thieves, as among Mafia clans, reflect the universal desire of people to experience the truth and the reality that no-one can function well without being able to trust someone. History under numerous Communist regimes was regularly distorted or fabricated; post-Communist cultures now reflect the immense hunger for truth, including spiritual truth, which this vacuum created. The entire complex Western economy functions on the basis of certain levels of trust in commitments. Marriages disintegrate without faithfulness. However, 'if we are faithless [Christ] is faithful, for he cannot deny himself' (2 Tim. 2:13).

Preserving self-giving love[32]

Although the same term for 'love' appears in Exodus 34:7 as in v. 6 *(hesed)*, here it introduces a contrast between God's love and forgiveness on the one hand and his justice on the other. In other words, 'maintaining' (preserving, reinvesting) love 'for thousands' is again curvilinear; it has its limits, as established by God on the basis of his sanctions against evil. Humans, too, in wholesome interpersonal relationships must give and receive God's *hesed* within appropriate parameters. But a distinctive focus here also lies in the concept of preserving. As we love God from our whole selves and love our neighbours as we love ourselves, God will always guard and reinvest that self-giving love in the lover. Yahweh is 'the faithful God, who keeps his covenant and his self-giving love to a thousandth generation with those who love and keep his commandments' (Dt. 7:9). God does not misuse love, like a manipulative sociopath, to seduce or cheat someone, but he redirects the love to make it of value in the lover's life. This preservative love is not merely reciprocal altruism but a multiplication of refreshing experiences. God guides his lovers through tough situations in which stabilizing love results in greater love: 'To him who has will more be given' (Mt. 25:29). In fact, Jesus immortalizes this love into eternal living, stressing that any expression of the *imago*, even giving a cup of cold water to the needy, will be rewarded. Any reflection of God's character will magnify benefits in this life and into all eternity.

Our predestination to conform to God's image, particularly in maintaining his self-giving love, may require various modifications of the human potential movement's emphases. Not only does our potential include the various gifts of the Spirit distributed as he wills (1 Cor. 12:11), but it also involves the fruit of the Spirit (another way of itemizing the character traits of the *imago Dei*). We will never maximize our potential, therefore, without helping our neighbours maximize theirs, especially including their realization of eternal life. Even Down's Syndrome children who are unspoiled and not abused can develop many of the elements of God's image within them, when they are treated with self-giving love. Their gifts may be few and their speed of response slow, but they can show great love, and they sense when they are mistreated.

Forgiving all kinds of evil[33]

The essence of God's being is to forgive the repentant of all categories of evil: (a) iniquity[34] — wickedness, including wilful or planned evil; (b) transgressions[35] — rebellion, specifically violating known laws; and (c) sin[36] — the most general of the three terms, with the sense of missing the mark of any moral ideal. We have already seen how David pleaded with God to wipe out his transgression (Ps. 51; *cf.* also Ps. 32). Jesus built on John the Baptist's message of repenting and producing evidence of change (Mt. 3:2; 4:17). As a prophet, John applied the *imago* characteristics practically to illustrate appropriate fruit of repentance (Lk. 3:7-14); Christ in the Sermon on the Mount modelled the same. Jesus' interpersonal life provoked people to reconciliation or to wrath. People who do not wish to change often react negatively to a righteous person. For those who desired to improve and repented, Jesus transformed them, irrespective of where they fell on the socio-economic spectrum — from prostitutes to government officials.

Jesus clearly taught in and after 'the Lord's prayer' that receiving forgiveness was directly correlated with forgiving others (Mt. 6:12, 14-15). We are to ask our heavenly Father to forgive our moral debts *as* we forgive our debtors. Otherwise God will not forgive us! Forgiveness is thus one area where God models us; heaven is a place only for reconciled people. Forgiveness actively uses the keys of the kingdom to bulldoze the gates of hell, shrinking its territory. As Jesus modelled the Father by creating an interpersonal climate for forgiveness and full *imago* development, so our modelling his interpersonal forgiveness reflects eternally matched dependent behaviour (Jn. 20:21-23).[37] Jesus even offered forgiveness to his persecutors and enemies (Lk. 23:34). One thief repented, and perhaps the centurion had a change of heart. Sadly, the betrayer, Judas, refused Jesus' offer of forgiveness, in contrast with Peter, the denier, who accepted it. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, echoed Jesus' words of forgiveness for his executors on the threshold of his death (Acts 7:60). There are times and places when forgiveness must be withheld, most notably when it is unrelentingly spurned (*e.g.* Mt. 18:15-18). But most of us could do with a far more lavish endowment of this *imago* character trait.

Practising justice[38]

Exodus 34:7b stresses the punitive side of God's justice with respect to unrepentant sin. Yahweh, however, is also completely positive in justice — he is fair in all his dealings with us. All the *imago* qualities are summarized in God's self-giving love and justice, which leads us to conclude that God is wholesome (holy)[39] and a right-relater (righteous).[40] Casual readers of the OT sometimes conclude that God is primarily judgmental in his dealings. Closer examination, though, shows that his punishment of the unrepentant arises from his love.[41] Often because of the pervasiveness of evil in our world and because of God's patience, we may doubt the existence of a wholly just God. The major model we have for demonstrating the *imago* characteristics in the face of gross injustice is Jesus' laying down his life and setting aside his rights for his friends and for the world. Yet after his unfair treatment and death, God vindicated Jesus through the resurrection and exaltation. If we die (either literally or metaphorically) for doing good, eventually his justice will create a resurrection.

However, it may take generations for God's retributive justice to be executed. We know much evil is modelled and passed on from generation to generation — everything from child abuse to cheating others. When there has been no repentance and change, God's punishment must eventually fall. Believers, though, are to be just and fair in their roles of responsibility (*e.g.* as parents or administrators); we must not take vengeance into our own hands (Heb. 10:30). Instead we must love our neighbours as we love ourselves, because this is the essence of Yahweh (Lev. 19:18). Although most of the armour of God that Christians are to wear (Eph. 6:10-20) comes directly from Isaiah's depictions of Yahweh's armour (Is. 11:5; 52:7; 59:17a), Paul never asks us to put on God's garments of vengeance (59:17b). When we pray for concrete ways by which to love and genuinely reflect Jesus' personality, many enemies become friends and make restitution for their past injustices (*e.g.* Lk. 19:1-10), and our churches develop into healthy growth groups.[42]

Perhaps an amplified or paraphrastic translation and diagram of Exodus 34:6-7 can best summarize the 'shekinah rainbow' of character traits central to the *imago Dei:*

> A God merciful (compassionately meeting needs),
> gracious (interpersonally warm and fulfilling),
> slow to anger (patient), and
> abounding (rich and overflowing) with
> self-giving love (steadfast lovingkindness), and
> truthfulness (interpersonal honesty and faithfulness);
> preserving (guarding and reinvesting) self-giving love for thousands,
> forgiving iniquity (wilful or planned evil),
> transgressions (law violations and trespasses), and
> sin (falling short of any moral ideal); but
> who will by no means clear the guilty (unrepentant),
> visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations.

Modern psychology and cultural anthropology

Psychology

The major contemporary psychological theories of the human person are humanistic in essence and disagree with the biblical doctrines and world-view in important ways. For Carl Rogers, each human is basically good, with a tendency to actualize his or her potentialities. This self-fulfilling force may be constricted by one's evil social environment, resulting in maladjustment, or it may be freed by other fully-functioning people. The major self-expressed values in the fully-functioning person (*i.e.*, one with a healthy personality) are unconditional positive regard, openness to experience, existential living, organismic trusting, experiential freedom, and creativity.[43] But how is it that naturally good individuals always become evil in a group rather than helping others to become better? Most of us have seen sociopaths with a deceptive ideal self who are creative at harming others. And not every existential choice or openness to a new experience is constructive.

Abraham Maslow's self-actualization theory has been widely encouraged in education, including allegedly Christian education. His hierarchy of needs is well known for being more specific than Rogers' list of healthy qualities. Before one's self-actualizing force can be freely expressed, one must have needs of physiology, safety, belongingness, esteem, cognition and aesthetics met. But again inner human nature is not evil, but good or at least neutral, and it is largely one's evil society which restricts the number of self-actualized persons to about one per cent of the population. Still, Maslow's Jewish background has perhaps left its stamp on his list of desirable values in the self-actualization process: wholeness, perfection, completion, justice, aliveness, richness, simplicity, beauty, goodness, truth, honesty, uniqueness, effortlessness, playfulness, reality and self-sufficiency.[44]

Alfred Adler, an early defector from Freud, saw people's main motivation in the striving for superiority or perfection. Humans are especially attracted by some fictional finalism that pulls them to exercise their creative self to will to power. An aspect of this perfectional motivation is an inner harmony and a striving to co-operate with fellow humans. Of the four possible personality types seen by Adler (ruling-dominant, getting-leaning, avoiding, and socially useful), only the last of these lead rich and purposeful lives. They confront problems and solve them in active and constructive ways. The most healthy people choose a lifestyle and ultimate goals agreeable to the ideals of society.[45] But what if that society is demonic? Many use their creative selves to become superior at living mistaken lifestyles, according to biblical norms. We would appreciate more elaboration of the most socially-useful and therefore healthy personality characteristics. Is there one ultimate goal pattern which is not fictional and fills out our desire for socially healthy characteristics?

Gordon Allport, referred to as the dean of American personologists, did not abandon his Christian upbringing in the development of his psychological theory. He credited his lifelong concern for human welfare to childhood experiences such as caring for some of his father's medical patients in their home, his parents' philosophy of hard work and earning only enough money to meet family needs, and his mother's role as teacher and philosopher in helping him search for ultimate, religious answers to his questions about life. Allport tried to develop his theory by studying healthy humans. Although he is known as a trait theorist, he stressed the individuality, dignity, and constant becoming of each person. Functional autonomy is governed by three principles: (a) organizing the energy level beyond mere survival to appropriate striving; (b) mastery and competence to be more efficient; and (c) appropriate patterning to integrate all motives around the total self. The result of his evaluation of normal, healthy adults led to seeing these qualities: the capacity for self-extension, the possibility of warm human interaction, demonstrating emotional security and self-acceptance, realistic perceptions, self-objectification, and a unifying philosophy of life.[46] Allport's healthy personality partially meshes with the *imago* characteristics but suffers from various deficiencies in clarity. What, for example, are the better unifying philosophies which really improve persons and societies?

Victor Frankl concluded from three years in Auschwitz and Dachau that persons determined meaning for themselves out of experiences of suffering. He felt there was a spiritual core which integrated the total personality. But there is no one moral or religious drive we are forced to satisfy – religion is one's search for ultimate meaning, differing for everyone. One is responsible for one's own existence and becomes authentic when one chooses responsibly for oneself and one's relations with others. Reaching self-transcendence is for Frankl the ultimate state of being for the healthy personality. Self-transcendence is attained by choosing to relate to someone or something beyond the self. The closest thing to the functioning *imago* for Frankl is the work of the conscience, which is the unconscious source of our existentially authentic decisions – prelogical and premoral.[47]

This brief review of a few of the most influential theories of personality and motivation of recent generations[48] shows that some views of the essence of human nature are so general and ambiguous that each theorist construes the specific components from his own motive system. To the extent that a given researcher is influenced by a Judaeo-Christian world-view (and most of the more prominent personality theorists have been, both positively and negatively), vestiges of the *imago* may be perceived in their theories. It is in recent studies in the field of cultural anthropology, however, which has largely rejected the relativism of a former era,[49] that more specific points of correspondence with the biblical view of God's image may be discerned.

Cultural anthropology

After premature claims earlier in this century that anthropology had proved that there were no cross-cultural moral or interpersonal absolutes common to humanity, recent research has tended to refute these claims. A spate of studies enables one to compile a fairly lengthy list of universally desirable moral or ethical behaviour traits and/or sanctions against failing to exhibit these traits.[50] The following list culls from these sources those cross-cultural ethical universals which most closely correspond to the characteristics of God's image in humanity and related biblical ethics:

sanctions against unjustifiable murder or maiming
sanctions against certain kinds of lying, especially breaking of oaths
obligations to keep certain promises
various property rights (land, clothes, tools, *etc.*)
restrictions against theft
loyalty to one's social unit (family, tribe, nation)
preference of certain common good over certain individual good
demand for co-operation within the group
provision for the poor and unfortunate
reciprocal duties of children and parents
restrictions against various forms of sexual practices
prevention of violence within in-groups
obedience to leaders
respect for the dead and proper ritual disposal of corpses
desire for and priority of immaterial qualities
inner sanctions preferable to external ones
economic justice – reciprocity and restitution
distributive justice as an obligation.

To list these traits as ethical universals does not, of course, mean that they are universally practised but rather that they are seen in every culture, to one degree or another, as desirable. What is more, even among individuals and peoples who are notorious for not following one or more of these standards, often there is an expectation that others will follow them, especially when those others are interpersonally relating to oneself.

One might argue here for empirical confirmation of the Golden Rule (Mt. 7:12) as a summary of the *imago* characteristics. People expect to be treated in certain ways, obligating them to treat others in similar ways (whether or not they realize it). The principle of the Golden Rule surely lies behind Jesus' conclusion to the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:36-37). Interestingly, there is considerable evidence that young children exercise Good Samaritan behaviour very early. In one important study, mothers of 12–18-month-olds were trained to make tape recordings at home. The mothers were to recount in detail what their children did when they saw someone in distress, such as another child get hurt or an adult looking sad. These records were kept over a nine-month period. The researchers found that there were twice as many helpful and understanding behaviours as aggressive and insensitive ones.[51] If parents continue to foster such altruistic behaviours, children usually grow up and continue to display altruism. Children whose parents ignore or punish helpfulness usually ignore or are aggressive to people in need. Even newborns usually cry to other crying infants, whereas they will not cry to a

recording of their own crying. Among hardened criminals, rules of rehabilitation based on a strict application of the Golden Rule have at times proved the only means of altering the behaviour of certain individuals.[52] All this evidence points to human beings being created in the moral and interpersonal image of God.

Various objections, however, may be put to these lines of reasoning. One is to point to societies, usually 'primitive' in nature (*i.e.*, having had limited contact with the modern world), in which the *imago* characteristics seem significantly absent or diminished. Colin Turnbull's influential description of the Ik people of the mountains of north central Africa, for example, contends that 'The Ik teach us that our much vaunted human values are not inherent in humanity at all, but are associated only with a particular form of survival called society, and that all, even society itself, are luxuries that can be dispensed with'.[53] The older members of the tribe gave verbal hints and a few behavioural evidences that the more basic values seen in the *imago* were firmly rooted in the Ikean past, but the elders' influence declined rapidly in the selfish torrent of the present. But this merely confirms Paul's teaching in Romans 1:18-32, that humans, in their depravity, may lapse into stages of extreme rebellion against God and his righteousness. W. Goldschmidt, for example, has claimed to find two moral universals among all cultures: (a) the search for some kind of 'symbolic eternity', and (b) 'the essential self-interest of the human individual'.[54] In other words, we want something about us to last eternally, yet we are universally selfish — observations which directly correlate with the biblical doctrines of creation and the fall.

Turnbull's description of the Ik is an excellent example of Goldschmidt's second universal leading to something close to hell on earth. Yet behind the Ik's greed, cruelty, and interpersonal frozenness, clues appeared that the *imago* was not entirely effaced — that is, if we take their evaluative statements seriously. For example, individual Ik did not want anyone stealing or being unfaithful to them, although they expected it would occur. Recognizing that mercy was more highly prized among neighbouring tribes, the Ik tried to take advantage of it, assuming that it was right that others should provide for the poor and needy in their midst. A certain amount of graciousness was even required for the Ik to permit Turnbull to remain in their midst for two-and-a-half years.

A second, quite different, alternative to the biblical doctrine of God's image in humanity attributes universal expectations of altruism to genetics. The recently developed science of sociobiology, for example, postulates altruistic genes which are passed along from parent to child, and are present in greater abundance in some individuals than in others.[55] Evil, selfish genes are also hypothesized.[56] Donald T. Campbell suggests that if such polygenetic bio-altruistic forces do exist, we would expect them to be more highly concentrated in those cultures which evolved into complex civilizations, cultures which 'all preached against human selfishness and cowardice'.[57] So, ancient complex civilizations like China, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Peru and Mexico would show higher concentrations of the altruistic genes than other cultures which did not evolve into such complex societies over so long a period of time.

Currently, the actual existence of such good or bad genes has not and, by virtue of the state of the science, cannot yet be proved or disproved. Nor are social scientists able to interview ancients to ask them about their moral experiences. Still, we may contact their descendants who remain as linguistically and psychologically in continuity with their ancestral traditions as possible. Familiarity with the world's religions and ethical systems, however, does not inspire confidence that such research would elicit what the sociobiologists' theories require. Instead, linkage to the biblically faithful branches of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, however recent or ancient that linkage has occurred, would seem more likely to be the significant factor.[58] Missiologist Don Richardson's experience and theories, moreover, suggest that the vestiges of the knowledge of the one true God and his ways may remain in other cultures, but that the further removed one is from the origins of those cultures, the more likely those vestiges are to have been blurred or effaced.[59]

Implications for ministry and mission

If a moral and interpersonal image of God remains, however distorted, in all human beings, then Christian witness and evangelism, especially in cross-cultural contexts, ought to utilize this fact to its best advantage. We can expect the characteristics of compassion, love, truthfulness, forgiveness, justice, and so on, to be desired, to varying degrees, among all peoples and by all individuals. Ministry should build on this common ground rather than immediately pointing out differences and tenets of competing ideologies with which Christians must disagree. Closely related is the use of the Golden Rule in Christian apologetics. We can expect others to believe that they should be treated in certain ways; we have the obligation, therefore, to insist that they treat others in those same ways. Pre-evangelism as well as post-evangelism (Christian nurture and discipleship) needs to rely heavily on the modelling of the *imago* characteristics. Such modelling may need to replace exclusively or even primarily verbal and cognitive instruction, thus enabling others to see that these goals are realizable, to significant degrees, in this life.

Herein lies a key distinctive of Jesus' own ministry. More so than any other founder of a major world religion or so-called great religious teacher, Jesus modelled what he demanded of others across the entire 'shekinah rainbow'. Contrast Jesus, the suffering servant, particularly with Mohammed the warrior; and the Bible (particularly the NT), and its enormous emphasis on love, notwithstanding periodic emphases on punishment, with the Qu'ran, and its unrelenting hostility and calls for holy war against infidels, punctuated by the refrain which lauds Allah as the Compassionate and Merciful One.

Christians active in counselling ministries, however formal or informal, may well also have to come to grips with the modelling implications of a moral-interpersonal theory of the image of God. Adequate therapy may not always (or often?) be possible within the constraints of professional client–therapist relationships. Opportunities for positive, wholesome interaction between clinicians and their clients in a variety of real-life settings may be needed. The positive role of small groups, particularly those with relational objectives as central, often called growth groups, may prove essential. Whether an outgrowth of one local church or of a parachurch ministry, wholesome Christ-like living needs to be encountered on a regular basis, as it is modelled by a variety of more mature Christians, especially as increasing numbers of men and women in our modern society come from destructive and dysfunctional backgrounds.

Ours is also a day in which individuals and special interest groups lobby vocally for human rights of many different kinds. Much counselling in assertiveness training has focused on the need for the oppressed to demand or defend their rights.[60] Clinician David Viscott advocates a list of basic rights for all humans: to grow, to be oneself, to be loved, to privacy, to be trusted, to be respected, to be accepted, to be happy, to be free, and to defend oneself.[61] If all people have the right to such treatment, who has the duty or responsibility to show it? We cannot talk about receiving our rights without being held responsible for meeting others' needs. The gospel focuses more on the voluntary relinquishing of our human rights than on demanding that we receive them. Christ said it was better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). The number of lawsuits brought by Christians against other Christians, in flagrant defiance of 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, shows how far removed even much of our Christian world is from modelling the Christlikeness which the *imago* spectrum epitomizes.

It would be easy to despair of expecting substantive character change and healthy personality profiles among God's people. But a correct understanding of the inaugurated eschatological framework of the Christian ethic means that we can expect precisely such change, even as we admit that we will never come close to perfection this side of Christ's return. The process will often be painfully slow, but significant progress can be made over time. But it will require commitments to faithfulness and integrity, long-term discipleship and interpersonal modelling of the ever-increasingly redeemable *imago Dei* in the lives of members of the church of Jesus Christ. Ward Wilson personally modelled these character traits throughout a lifetime of ministry, even and especially during his protracted struggle with cancer. It is our hope that, even as he did, more Christians might follow in Jesus' steps to demonstrate to a desperately needy world the possibility of healthy, wholesome relationships in Christ.

[1]After receiving the MA in Christian Education from Wheaton Graduate School, Ward Wilson pastored a church in Oakland, California, served InterVarsity in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and received the MA in psychology from Eastern Michigan University and the PhD in psychology from the University of Florida. He then embarked on a teaching career in

psychology which took him from Viterbo College in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, to Wheaton Graduate School, to Greenville College in Illinois, to Palm Beach Atlantic College, and finally to King College in Bristol, Tennessee. He went to be with our Lord in the sixtieth year of his life.

[2]Parts of the article are written entirely in my words [Craig Blomberg], parts entirely in Dr Wilson's, and parts reflect a combination of the two. I am grateful for the initiative and help of Ward's wife Betty in encouraging me to edit his materials and to *Themelios* for agreeing to publish them. Because of the nature of those materials, references to the secondary literature in psychology are not always as up-to-date as they might be. Hopefully this will not in any way detract from the value of the thesis itself. I have added numerous footnotes in the exegetical discussions and occasionally elsewhere.

[3]For the state of the question in biblical scholarship, see Gerald Bray, 'The Significance of God's Image in Man', *TynB* 42 (1991), pp. 195-225. For a recent survey of the most influential views in the history of systematic theology, see Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), pp. 124-134, and for the relevant biblical data, pp. 134-142.

[4]*Cf., e.g.,* Darrell Smith, *Integrative Therapy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), esp. pp. 37-48; with Harry R. Boers, *An Ember Still Glowing: Humankind as the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

[5]The most important exception to this trend is Mormonism, based on its belief that God the Father appeared to Joseph Smith in a body.

[6]*E.g.,* J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 232.

[7]See esp. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol. 3.1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), pp. 183-206.

[8]*On the Trinity* 10:11.18.

[9]*Summa Theologica* 1:93.4.

[10]Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 150-177.

[11]Lewis and Demarest, *Theology* Vol. 2, pp. 143-160. The categories are posited at the outset of the discussion, and then scriptural teaching on each is marshalled, but it is never demonstrated that all are part of the *imago.*

[12]*Luther's Works* 1:61-63; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1:15.3-4.

[13]See esp. G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

[14]Herein lies the primary reason Bray, 'Image', rejects the classic moral interpretation, a point he claims (with some overstatement) has virtually never been noticed by exegetes or theologians (p. 207).

[15]For a history of recent exegesis, see G.A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Gen. 1:26–28 in a Century of Old Testament Interpretation* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988).

[16]*Cf.* John I. Durham, *Exodus* (Dallas: Word, 1987), p. 444, who translates 'ways' (from Heb. *derek*) as 'intentions'. 'Glory' *(kābôd)* as 'character traits' is plain from 34:6-7. On 'goodness' *(ṭôb)*, Durham, *Exodus*, p. 452, comments: 'What he [Yahweh] gives rather is a *description*, and at that, a description not of how he *looks* but how he *is*.' On 'name' *(šēm)*, see *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* Vol. 2, p. 934: 'The concept of personal names in the Old Testament often included existence, character and reputation.'

[17]*Cf.* esp. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), pp. 513-514, who agrees that the communicable attributes constitute God's image in humanity, but who does not defend this postulate in any exegetical detail nor highlight the specific attributes stressed in this essay.

[18]Durham, *Exodus*, p. 454.

[19]Perhaps even a 'midrash', as in A.T. Hanson, 'The Midrash in II Corinthians 3: A Reconsideration', *JSNT* 9 (1980), pp. 2-28.

[20]*Cf.* Colin Kruse, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Leicester: IVP, 1987), p. 101: 'The continuous and progressive transformation by which believers are changed *from one degree of glory to another* is the moral transformation which is taking place in their lives so that they approximate more and more to the likeness of God expressed so perfectly in the life of Jesus Christ.'

[21]Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 134.

[22]G.B. Caird, *Saint Luke* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 105, comments, '"*Be merciful*" might appear to be less exacting than Matthew's "You, therefore, must be perfect" (Mt. 5:48). In the Old Testament, however, ... mercy is the very character of God. The son must inherit the attributes of his Father.'

[23]*Cf.* A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas: Word, 1990), pp. 287-289.

[24]*Cf.* N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), pp. 138-139: 'This passage clearly looks back to 1:15-20; the intention of creation is fulfilled in redemption, and, conversely, redemption is understood as new creation.'

[25]*Cf.* further James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Leicester: IVP, 1981), pp. 171-174.

[26]From the Heb. *rāḥûm*, 'the deep inward feeling we know variously as compassion, pity, mercy . . . most easily prompted by small babies (Isa. 13:18) or other helpless people' (*TWOT* Vol. 2, p. 841).

[27]From the Heb. *ḥēn*, 'favour, grace, charm'. *Cf.* the root *ḥānan*, referring to a 'heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need' (*TWOT* Vol. 1, pp. 302, 303).

[28]An idiomatic translation of the Heb. *'erek 'appayîm* – see *BDB*, p. 60.

[29]*E.g.* Carl R. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, Ohio: C.E. Merrill, 1969); Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper, 1956).

[30]From Heb. *hesed*, widely agreed to reflect the OT's distinctive concept of God's covenant loyalty.

[31]From Heb. *'omet*, meaning both truthfulness and faithfulness. *Cf.* *TWOT* Vol. 1, p. 52: 'This word carries underlying sense of certainty, dependability.'

[32]The verb comes from the Heb. root *nāṣar*, to watch, guard, or keep (*TWOT* Vol. 2, p. 595: 'guarding with fidelity').

[33]To 'forgive' comes from the Heb. root *nāśa'*, to lift, carry, take, here in the sense of taking away, and hence forgiving, various kinds of sin (*BDB*, pp. 669-671).

[34]Heb. *'awôn* – 'iniquity, guilt or punishment for guilt . . . infraction, crooked behaviour, perversion' (*TWOT* Vol. 2, p. 650).

[35]Heb. *peša'*, rebellion – 'a breach of relationships, civil or religious, between two parties' (*TWOT* Vol. 2, p. 741).

[36]Heb. *ḥaṭṭā'āh*, feminine derivative of *ḥāta'* – 'to miss a mark or way' (*TWOT* Vol. 2, p. 277).

[37]Neal E. Miller and John Dollard, *Social Learning and Imitation* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1979), pp. 132-152.

[38]The concept implied by the sentence, 'Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. . . .'

[39]The word 'health' is one of several English words derived from the proto-Anglo-Saxon *hal* or *hol*. These derivatives may be grouped into three basic categories: physical, interpersonal and transcendental. Most psychologically healthy people function by a transcendental or cosmic belief system about one's unique worth. In religious communities such a person is labelled *holy*; in other settings, *wholesome* – integrated and psychosocially approved, with a sense of a special place in the universe.

[40]On any combination of the views of imputed and infused righteousness, righteous people become rightly related to God and increasingly rightly related to one another.

[41]See, *e.g.,* Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

[42]On which see, *e.g.,* Em Griffin, *Getting Together: A Guide for Good Groups* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1982).

[43]Carl R. Rogers, 'A Theory of Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships', in *Psychology: A Study of Science* Vol. 3, ed. Sigmund Koch (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), pp. 184-256; *idem, On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1961).

[44]Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); *idem, The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Viking, 1971).

[45]Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1927).

[46]Gordon W. Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (London: Constable, 1937); *idem, Pattern and Growth in Personality* (New York: Holt, 1961).

[47]Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970); *idem, The Doctor and the Soul* (New York: Vintage, 1973).

[48]For more detailed surveys, *cf.* J.S. Wiggins, K.E. Renner, G.L. Clore and R.J. Rose, *Principles of Personality* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1976); and S.R. Maddi, *Personality Theories* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey, 1980).

[49]As stressed esp. by Paul Hiebert, 'Critical Contextualization', *IBMR* 11 (1987), pp. 104-112.

[50]G.P. Murdock, 'The Common Denominator of Cultures', in *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*, ed. R. Linton (New York: Columbia, 1945), pp. 123-142; L.J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures* (Techny, Ill.: Divine Word, 1963); R.H. Beis, 'Some Contributions of Anthropology to Ethics', *The Thomist* 28 (1964), pp. 174-224; L. Kohlberg, 'From Is to Ought', in *Cognitive Development and Epistemology*, ed. T. Mischel (New York: Academic, 1971), pp. 151-235; D.T. Campbell, 'On the Conflicts between Biological and Social Evolution and between Psychology and Moral Tradition', *American Psychologist* 30 (1975), pp. 1113-1126.

[51]E.M. Cummings, B. Hollenbeck, R. Iannotti, M. Radke-Yarrow, and C. Zahn-Waxler, 'Early Organization of Altruism and Aggression: Developmental Patterns and Individual Difference', in *Altruism and Aggression: Biological and Social Origins*, ed. C. Zahn-Waxler, E.M. Cummings, and R. Iannotti (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), pp. 165-188.

[52]Stanton E. Samenow, *Inside the Criminal Mind* (New York: Random House, 1984), pp. 211-243.

[53]Colin M. Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), p. 294.

[54]W. Goldschmidt, *Comparative Functionalism* (Berkeley: University of California, 1966), p. 136.

[55]See esp. E.O. Wilson, *Sociobiology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1975); *idem, On Human Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1978).

[56]Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (New York: Oxford, 1976).

[57]Campbell, 'Conflicts', p. 1118.

[58]Contrast, *e.g.*, the classic Hindu devaluation of human life with the dignity for it brought by Christian missionaries, or the somewhat fatalistic traditional religions of the Andean Peruvians with the contemporary evangelical Christian resurgence leading to social action.

[59]Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura: Regal, 1981).

[60]*E.g.* Manuel J. Smith, *When I Say No I Feel Guilty* (New York: Bantam, 1977).

[61]David S. Viscott, *How to Live with Another Person* (New York: Arbor House, 1974), pp. 31-43.

The roles of the woman and the man in Genesis 3

Richard S. Hess

Dr Rick Hess, our Review Editor, teaches at Glasgow Bible College, Scotland.

Introduction: sex roles in Genesis 3

The purpose of this essay is to consider the place and position accorded to the woman and to the man in the Garden of Eden. Particular emphasis will be placed upon recent interpretations of the key texts. I will first consider the options which have been set forth recently for understanding the roles of the woman and the man, and then examine the variety of contexts which have been suggested for the setting of Genesis 3. I will then investigate the controversial texts of Genesis 3: the dialogue between the serpent and the woman; the curses/judgments; and the naming of the woman by the man.

Two dominant approaches exist regarding the question of the roles of the man and of the woman in Genesis 3:

1. The texts are clearly chauvinist and should be regarded as such. This is the majority opinion for most of the history of interpretation. Modern scholarship continues to emphasize this (*cf.* Trible) and literary approaches have argued that this is the most consistent way to read the text (Clines). However, antiquity does not assure the interpretation. Many of the earlier societies which studied these chapters possessed a 'patriarchal' bias in which women were regarded as naturally possessing a lower status than men. Therefore, they would naturally read Genesis with this bias. The identification of this bias allows for the reading of the text from alternative perspectives. Clines represents a feminist perspective but still concludes in favour of an 'irredeemably patriarchal' reading as the best one for this text. Reservations about some of his analysis (see below) lead me to consider alternative interpretations.

2. The texts may represent a fundamentally patriarchal perspective, but the solution is to deconstruct them which, in this case, means to 'depatriarchalize' them (Trible). Thus an alternative interpretation is set forth which emphasizes the ways in which the minor or oppressed characters 'subvert' the narrative so as to exert power where it is denied to them. This is the approach of most of the feminist literary readings of the text, which either build upon or critique the work of Trible. Her study argued that humanity was originally created as a sexually undifferentiated earth creature. When woman was created, man was left over as the sexual counterpart.[1] A similar conclusion is reached by Brenner. She sees woman as portrayed as originally stronger and dominant, but as having forfeited this position by misbehaviour. The misbehaviour led to her subjugation but also to humanity's acquisition of sexual knowledge and of the ability to procreate. These studies are useful for their explorations of implications of the dialogues and actions in chapter 3. Thus the active and wisdom roles of the woman are properly emphasized. However, none of the human characters in chapter 3 departs as victor or hero.

Neither approach is entirely satisfactory. Recognition of a patriarchal element in Genesis 3, like arguments for 'depatriarchalizing', needs to be verified or falsified by the input of recent interpretative approaches. At the same time consideration of these approaches provides perspectives which may suggest new directions for exegesis.

The setting of Genesis 3

Three recent approaches to this story have been suggested. The first is ideological, the second is religious and the third is anthropological.

1. An allegory defending royal control in monarchical Judah over against peasant independence

Kennedy takes a 'materialist' approach with a view that the couple represent peasants in Judah and God represents the king. The king allows the couple to work his estate and provides them with necessities of life. The serpent represents attempts to educate the peasantry and lead them to rebellion. However, the narrative justifies the strict control of the peasantry by the royalty in order to prevent revolution. The judgments reflect the harsh reality of peasant life which is traced to the rebellious nature of the first couple. This does not do justice to the text within the context of Genesis 1-11, wherein the line of promise avoids explicit associations with royalty. Instead, those assertions of human dominion that do appear are portrayed in a negative light.[2] A variation of this theme, with a less fanciful premise, is that of Brueggemann, who finds in the origins of humanity in dust and in their elevation to a type of rulership the identification of the text with the Davidic monarchy.

The royalist approach does not concern itself directly with differences in male and female roles. Insofar as it touches upon them, it views differences as a reflection of injustices in the society in general.

2. A polemic against Canaanite religion

For Wyatt, the serpent and his wisdom are to be associated with the Canaanite god El. The tree of life is similar to the pole or tree in the Asherah cult. The sin of the couple involves the participation in the Canaanite cult of El, for which they are cast out of the garden to the east, just as Israel went eastward into exile for their sins of Canaanite worship. While we may see (with Alonso-Schöckel) wisdom motifs abounding in Genesis 2-3, this interpretation of Wyatt's needs more explicit evidence to make it the central thrust of the passage. The polemical approach is also argued by Soggin on traditional source-critical grounds and by Wallace using form-critical methods.

A creative variant to this approach has been suggested by Gardner. She posits that the narrative of chapters 2-3 'is the product of reflection upon Yahweh's intentions for Israel and their distortion within the pre-exilic community when the fundamental commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me", was

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breached'. Thus the text serves to warn husbands to control their wives because 'women were especially attracted to the worship of the goddess [represented by the tree] and introduced men to their cult' (p. 14). The earlier period of Israel includes women such as Deborah in positions of authority and capability while the later periods denigrate women's position in society. So it is in Genesis 2–3. The woman is at first equal to the man and the initiator and conversationalist, but later she is the first to sin and is demoted to a subservient position.

The polemical approach has possibilities for explaining the role of many elements in Genesis 2–3. However, different themes predominate in chapter 3. These include emphases on the failure to listen carefully to God's word and the pride of humanity in trying by itself to achieve divinity. The appearance of these elements elsewhere in Genesis 1–11 and their prominent role throughout the OT suggest that other themes, such as the polemic against Canaanite religion, are of secondary importance.

3. A story from the Early Iron Age world of Israel's struggle to settle in the hill country

Meyers develops this thesis in her 1988 volume, *Discovering Eve.* She rejects the term 'patriarchal' as applied to these texts because she is less concerned with the texts as describing what the role of men and women ought to be. Instead, she sees the texts as descriptive of what their roles actually were. This is an extremely important contribution to the analysis of chapter 3, because it demands that great care be exercised in drawing any conclusions regarding Genesis 3 which attempt to establish what is normative for the reader.

In their original setting, Genesis 2–3 represent a struggle to survive in which men and women participated equally. Properly understood, they are not reflections of a hierarchical society but one in which a great deal of intensive labour was required for survival and the functional roles of the respective participants had to be recognized. This meant that women had to bear as many children as possible and both sexes had to devote themselves to agricultural labour, men more so as they were not bearing children. These realities of life became idealized in early Israel and written into the narratives of chapters 2–3.

On the one hand, the Mesopotamian motifs and geography of Genesis 2 suggest an origin for at least some elements of the narrative outside Palestine. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that many of the allusions which Meyers identifies have merit. One can understand the attempt to take traditions and to relate them to the period of Israel's initial entry into the land. Thus, just as we might tell children of an event a century or two ago by prefacing our remarks with, 'There were no telephones or televisions then', so the narrator begins the story in chapter 2 with, 'There was no rain or anyone to work the soil'. The narrator recognizes that the present place where the Israelites live (the hill country of Canaan) is not like what the land once was for the first couple.

What went wrong? The dialogue between the serpent and the woman

The first seven or eight verses of Genesis 3 provide an account of the garden incident which is as subtle as the serpent in its allusions and implications. However, it forms the basis for interpretations of the role of woman insofar as woman is seen as the 'first to sin'. In order to understand what happened, the text will be examined from a literary perspective, both in terms of what the characters represent and from the viewpoint of the way in which the dialogue reflects the divine prohibition of 2:16-17.

The serpent is the first of the characters mentioned and the only one assigned a characteristic, shrewdness. Wisdom was ascribed to snakes in the Ancient Near Eastern world. Along with wisdom, the snake was associated with fertility, something which does not at first appear in Genesis 3.[3] The Israelite perception of a snake would not be primarily as a creature of wisdom, but as an unclean animal (Wenham). Thus there is some support in these diverse views of the character of the snake for an implicit polemic between the faith of ancient Israel and that of its neighbours, *i.e.* the snake's uncleanness vs. its characteristic as shrewd and wise.

The woman is represented as a real person, not some symbolic figure. She has not been given any previous characteristics other than that of being a helper with the man. She enters into conversation with the serpent. It is only at the end of the story, after the curses, that she is given a name.

The man, also nameless throughout this story, has a task given to him in chapter 2 (Hess). It involves the care of the garden. In fact it is this role which is played upon in the Hebrew word for man, *'ādām*, and that for the ground which he tills, *'adāmâ*. Although both man and woman react rather than act, it is the passive role of the man which is stressed. Note that it is the woman who repeats the statement God said to the man. The narrative assumes that sometime between chapters 2 and 3 the man spoke with the woman and explained the rules for living in the garden. We are never told that this happened, further accentuating the passive role of the man. In fact, the only actions in which the man of chapter 3 is involved are eating the fruit, answering God's questions, and naming his wife. The first two are reactions which, like being driven from the garden, are not self-initiated. The third continues something he already began doing in 2:23. Is the passive role of the man in part responsible for the problems which befall the couple?

The participants in the conversation are the woman and the snake. The snake, who initiates the dialogue, approaches the woman. Why not the man? Setting aside time-honoured traditions concerning female propensities toward deception (something which is not found even in 1 Timothy 2), the snake had another reason consistent with the man's task of naming the creatures in chapter 2. If name-giving is a kind of discernment in determining the nature of a creature, and if the man's role as caretaker of the garden (2:19-20) would have included the naming of the snake,[4] then the man would have seen in the snake the characteristic of shrewdness. There is no indication that the woman was party to this information, nor that she was informed by the man (another example of the man's passivity?). Therefore, she is susceptible to the snake's persuasive powers.

In examining the conversation between the woman and the snake, it is of interest to compare the statements of the snake and the woman with God's statement of 2:16-17. The snake's statement in 3:1 is a contradiction of God's statement in 2:16. In fact, 2:16 adds the emphatic infinitive absolute construction to the verb: 'from every tree of the garden you shall indeed eat', while the snake takes the basic statement word for word and puts a 'not' in front of it: 'you shall not eat from any tree of the garden'.

The woman's response in verse 2 appears initially to confirm God's command, although neither the emphatic emphasis on the verb nor the comprehensive 'all', 'every' is found there: 'We may eat from the fruit of the tree(s) of the garden'. Thus the suggestion of God's generosity in providing a wide selection of food is mitigated. As has long been observed, here is the first step toward the rebellion which follows. It is found in the failure of proper gratitude for what God has given.

The woman's statement of God's qualification, forbidding eating of the one tree, is interesting in what is changed. In 2:17 God identified this fruit as 'From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat'. However, the woman simply defines the fruit by the location of the tree: 'from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God has said, "You shall not eat." ' By not defining the tree as the one of good and evil, the woman has removed the reason for not eating from it. Bound up with the knowledge which this fruit conveys is the reason for the prohibition. Therefore, when she goes on to describe the prophesied outcome of eating this fruit, the consequences seem to outweigh the deed: death for eating fruit – come on, you must be joking!

The actual prohibition, 'you shall not eat from it', is supplemented by the woman with the phrase, 'you shall not touch it'. Of course, this makes the command appear more restrictive, although probably commentators have made more of this than is warranted. After all, what would they touch the fruit for, if not to eat it? The point is that we have one more example of a subtle distortion of the original words of God. Misusing and perhaps misunderstanding God's word lies at the heart of the first rebellion against God.

In 2:17 God warned the man in the strongest possible terms not to eat, 'for on the day you eat from it you will surely die' – again with the verb having an emphatic form added to it. However, the woman reports the warning in the lightest possible terms, omitting both the sense of the consequence occurring on the same day and the emphatic form of the verb, 'lest you die'. Thus the consequence is played down and the woman invites the snake to respond.

The snake's response is to deny the emphatic warning of God by repeating the emphatic form and attaching a negative particle to the front of it, 'you will not surely die'. Here he fills in what the woman glossed over. He then goes on further to fill in what was omitted by the statements of the woman in failing to identify the tree. The tree is called what it is because it enables one to become like God, knowing good and evil. That this actually happens seems to be confirmed by verse 22. However, that a form of death lies in store as a consequence of the rebellion also seems to be suggested.

At this point the narrative resumes in a series of actions (verses 6-8): she saw, she took, she ate, she gave, he ate, their eyes were opened, they knew, they sewed, they made, they heard, they hid. Once again, the passive attitude of the man in contrast to the woman is evident in the initial verbs and in their subjects. The ironies of the couple listening to the snake rather than to God and of the trees, designed as a context for God to meet the couple, now used as a means of separating the two, enhance the effect which this rebellion creates.

The vain attempts to conceal themselves from each other and from God end with God's appearance and voice. Notice how easy it was for the couple to forget God's word the minute he was absent, even in the midst of his creation. Notice too how it is God, not the couple, who initiates the call back to himself. God questions the man first, the one to whom the command was first given. The questions and responses tend to show how widespread the rebellion is, although the obvious intent of the couple is to shift it from themselves. Note that the first word of both responses of the man and the woman is the person/animal they want to blame (the woman!/the snake!). God does not question the serpent but begins to pronounce 'judgment'.

What went wrong? Certainly there were many aspects to the rebellion which were involved, much in the way of pride, of ignoring or distorting God's word, and of listening to the serpent. But the 'judgments' which follow make clear what went wrong from the standpoint of God. There are two causal clauses connected to these judgments, one with respect to the snake in verse 14 and one with respect to the man in verse 17. The former is a general condemnation of the snake for having 'done this'. It refers to the woman's statement in verse 13 which suggests that the serpent led her astray. The condemned action was the serpent's deception designed to get the couple to eat of the forbidden fruit. The action condemned with respect to the man was that he listened to his wife. He should have known better because God had spoken directly to him on the matter. No action of the woman is condemned but she is included in the 'judgments' because of her participation in the rebellion. She did not deliberately deceive, like the serpent, nor did she disobey a command given to her directly from God, like the man, but she did disobey and she knew it.

The roles of the woman and of the man must be understood in the context of the reason for the rebellion. The motivation was to know as God knows, to possess divine wisdom and to seize God's gifts and use them in whatever way the man and the woman wanted.[5] This desire is related to the errors already observed in the woman's conversation with the snake: the lack of proper gratitude for God's gifts and the misuse of God's Word. The gifts include more than the garden and the tree. They include the presence of God and fellowship with the Creator. This is especially represented in God's gifts of his words which describe how to live in the garden. The distortion of God's word is a misuse of God's gift. The motivation for that distortion is the desire to possess a 'full life' apart from God's will. However, the result is the spiritual 'death' of expulsion from the garden, with the consequent difficulties of coping in the resulting world.

Put in another way, this is the attempt of humanity to penetrate the divine world, to become like gods. It recurs more explicitly in 11:1-9 and in reverse in 6:1-4. In all these, God resists their efforts and places restrictions upon humanity. The irony is that fullness of life requires the initiative of the Creator's word. It begins anew in Genesis 12:1-3, when God calls Abram into a covenant of faithful dependence and apart from the world in which humanity was/is still trying to become like gods. The lack of gratitude for God's gifts and the misuse of his word are two parts of the whole rebellion in which human beings seek to become divine without the consent of God. Such failing was shared by the couple. Both participated and both were judged. The dominant role of the woman might appear to assign her greater liability, but both suffer the same fate in the end — expulsion from the garden.

The curses and 'judgments' of 3:14-19

Note that people are not cursed, only the snake and the ground. Verse 14 is easy enough to understand as applied to the serpent. We may add that the mode of locomotion for the serpent is one which is characteristic of those creatures who are unclean. They do not walk nor swim nor fly (Gn. 1), but perform some hybrid action.[6]

The enmity of verse 15 is best understood as an eternal conflict between the snake and the human race. The odd expression of 'seed of woman' may already introduce an idea which is not fully explained by the fear of snakes. It may not require a virgin birth for its interpretation but it certainly allows for something out of the ordinary.

Verse 16 describes the judgment which God gives to the woman. The traditional understanding of this text suggests it describes the origin of pain in childbirth and of an inferior status for women in relation to men or at least to their husbands. However, an alternative interpretation has been advanced. Carol Meyers argues that the 'toil' (*'iṣṣābôn*) in this verse is not the labour of childbirth but rather the effort involved in assistance in farming the land. Thus the woman is required both to work in the field and to bear children. This means an additional task for the woman which suggests that the man would 'predominate' over her in the labour in the field. In other words, he would be able to do more agricultural work while she was bearing children. He would be able to insist on sexual relations because of social and economic necessities for continuation of the tribe and for a large labour pool to assist in the heavy agricultural work. This is the meaning of 'rule over' according to Meyers. She identifies this text with early Israel and its initial settlement in the hill country. From this conclusion she derives data concerning labour and population requirements for continuation of Israelite tribal life as it is settling in the central hill country.

The first part of this interpretation has a greater likelihood of being true than the second. The word for 'toil' is not used elsewhere for childbirth. Thus Meyers' translation of the first line of verse 16 makes sense of the syntax and of the word for 'toil', which nowhere else is used as 'pain': 'I will greatly multiply your efforts and your childbearing.' The second half of the first line would carry the same meaning: 'With [in the sense of "in addition to"] work you will bear children.'

On the other hand, the suggestion that the verb 'to rule over' can be altered to the idea of 'predominate' seems forcing it into an explanation which has no parallels elsewhere. This is not necessary nor even the preferred interpretation. The idea of mastery is addressed by Foh. She suggests that woman's desire in this verse is not a sexual desire but a desire to dominate. The text then depicts a struggle of wills between men and women. The question which Foh goes on to address is whether the final statement of this verse is a statement of fact ('you will want to dominate your husband but your husband *will* rule over you') or one implying a determined command on God's part ('you will want to dominate your husband but your husband *should* rule over you'). Since I believe this is part of a description of the new order of things, I prefer to accept the former interpretation.

Verses 14-19 describe a situation which was all too familiar to ancient Israel. There was a division of roles between men and women, reflecting the economic needs of the society. Both were required to participate in the labour for the fruitfulness of the land. However, women were restricted in their contribution, especially as the demands of childbearing and raising placed an additional responsibility upon them. The struggle of wills reflects the tensions created by the demands of survival, and the consequent threat to family harmony.

The naming of Eve in verse 20

Eve's name (*ḥāwwāh*) can be associated with the word *ḥāy*, understood as 'living', 'alive' and as deriving from the root related to 'live' (*ḥyh*). The actual form as vocalized in Hebrew may reflect a factitive expression of the root, *i.e.* 'make alive'.[7] The form as it appears in the name is best understood as a nominal form, possessing a Hebrew noun formation often used to designate occupation or profession. In the case of Eve it denotes the role of giving and nurturing life. This parallels the explanation which follows it in Genesis 3:20. It also explains why the name is given at this point. Insofar as 3:16 involves the first assignment of the responsibility of

childbirth to the woman (Meyers 1983, pp. 344-349), the giving of the name in 3:20 reflects an awareness of this role for the woman.

As with 'the man' *'ādām* (Hess), this name may function as a title. It occurs only after the curses and describes the one aspect of woman's fate which differs from that of man, the bearing of children. This is why the name is given at this point. It follows the first time the couple are informed of the role of woman. The only other occurrence of the name Eve is found in Genesis 4:1 in a context which describes the conception and birth of her first son, Cain. This is followed by the conception and birth of a second son, Abel, in verse 2. The verbs in this verse also refer back to the Eve of verse 1. Thus the distinctive role assigned the woman in 3:16 is shown in her name and in the use of that name when she first exercises that role in the Genesis narrative.

The expulsion from the garden in verses 21-23

The Garden of Eden has been understood as the prototype of the sanctuary where the faithful meet with and worship God.[8] The tunics of skin are God's means of providing for the sin of the couple by an animal sacrifice. The skins literally cover them, thereby hiding their shame. The use of animal skins introduces physical death for the first time and implicitly suggests the erection of a barrier between God and people (Ratner). The consequences of the expulsion from the garden meant the cessation of the man's distinctive role as the caretaker of the garden. How does this fulfil God's promise of death to those who eat the fruit? Moberly has suggested that the 'death' is a metaphor involving 'personal decay'. He bases this on a similar usage of 'death' in the warnings of Deuteronomy 30:15, 19. I believe the consequence, the 'death', for the man and the woman is primarily seen in the separation and alienation of the man and woman from the garden, from each other (blaming one another and the coats of animal skin), and from God (expulsion from the garden). Hauser emphasizes the change of language to describe the alienation which begins with the eating of the fruit.

Conclusion

The approach of Meyers has the advantage of understanding both the man and the woman of Genesis 3 as more than literary figures subject to the ideological manipulation of the authors. They represent real people struggling for survival in early Israel. As such, the approach challenges us to apply the biblical text to our own lives and families.

However, the context of chapter 3 at the beginning of Genesis suggests a wider scope than Iron Age Israel. It implies something understood as a universal norm which is established by God. Even so, this norm is clearly set in a particular cultural context. It is one which assumes an agricultural society. No mention is made of what life would be like for those who engaged in other occupations, although the following chapter demonstrates that the narrator was aware of a variety of occupations in which people could engage. Yet principles enshrined in these judgments, such as the need and value of human labour, are intended to have a universal application. Beyond the obvious ongoing role of bearing children, it is not clear that the other judgments regarding women should be distinguished from the original temporal context in which the narratives were first written and applied. The roles and responsibilities of the man and of the woman do not otherwise differ, nor is there any explicit justification for male domination.

We can find the purpose of Genesis 3, within its present context at the beginning of the Bible, as a statement of the human condition. This is the story of the lost opportunity for fellowship with God. Left to our own devices we are prone to deceive ourselves into thinking that we can become like gods. Instead, like this world, we stand under the judgment of God. Genesis 3 stresses the importance of listening again to God's redemptive word and of finding in that word the opportunity to encounter God's saving presence. The reversal of God's punishment of the first couple is therefore not a suspension of labour any more than it is a cessation of having and raising children. These will continue as long as the present world endures. Rather, the reversal of God's punishment for the rebellion of the garden is a readmittance into the 'garden' of fellowship with God. It is this expectation which Christians find fulfilled in the promises of the NT.

[1]For a critique of this interpretation, *cf.* Hess 1990, especially pp. 13-15.

[2]*E.g.* Lamech of Cain's line, the sons of 'god', Nimrod, and the builders of Babel. Van Seters' attempt to argue for the development and combination of two separate creation stories (*i.e.* the creation of humanity to work for the gods and the creation of the king) in a single Neo-Babylonian text has little to commend it. The 'parallel' is very limited. Thus the Neo-Babylonian text and the Genesis account are best understood as developments of separate and unrelated traditions. Nor is there any reason to argue an evolution in a particular direction (*e.g.* Gn. 2-3 could be an earlier, democratized text which the Neo-Babylonian text tradition developed for its royal ideological interests).

[3]Sjöberg has questioned the translation of the Hebrew word *nāḥāš* as 'snake'. Instead he argues that 'reptile' could also be an appropriate translation for this animal. If so, the parallel with the Ancient Near Eastern snake collapses. However, the translation 'snake' seems more likely given the strong parallel between the 'wisdom' of the Genesis creature and that ascribed elsewhere to snakes.

[4]On the role of name-giving, *cf.* Ramsey 1988. Schmitt cites an example of naming as discernment rather than domination in the 18th-century BC Atrahasis Epic in which the lesser gods give Mami, Mother Goddess, the title of 'Mistress of all the Gods'. Clines 1990, p. 39 n. 3, challenges this, arguing that domination and discernment are not mutually exclusive. However, this begs the question. The argument made is that one should assume discernment when name-giving is recorded and only assume domination when this is explicitly stated (which it is not in the story of the naming of woman in Genesis 2 and 3). Nor is Tosato's position on this point (p. 390 n. 4) any more convincing. In the Bible no-one appears in the narrative without a name or a title of some sort. The only figure in the narrative who perceives what has happened is the man (other than God, who does not do naming after his creative work; indeed, God never names the man). Therefore, it is logical and necessary that the man names the woman.

[5]*Cf.* Wenham. Wallace 1985, p. 129, discusses these motivations in light of the Ancient Near Eastern contexts of the symbol of the tree of knowledge and of the desire to become like gods.

[6]The basic study on this distinction is that of Douglas. *Cf.* Budd for a summary and critique of more recent approaches.

[7]This interpretation was suggested by J. Greenfield and appears in the study of Kikawada 1972, p. 34 n. 9. *Cf.* also Zimmermann 1966, p. 317, for comparative arguments adducing the similar meaning, 'the one who gives birth'.

[8]*Cf.* Wenham 1986. Wallace compares the description of Eden with divine dwellings. For Wallace, this leads to the perspective of an originally mythical 'garden of God'. For Wenham, however, it points in a different direction. The garden is 'an archetypal sanctuary'. Several aspects may be cited, in addition to those noted in the paragraph. Both the garden of Gn. 2 and the Tabernacle/Temple are entered from the East, have jewels and gold, portray God as walking back and forth, and charge people with guarding or keeping it. See also Chilton on structure and contents, and Meyers 1976 on the menorah. It has also been observed that the construction of the Tabernacle has allusions to the initial act of creation in it. Moses 'saw all the work ... as the Lord had commanded' and 'blessed' the people (Ex. 39:43) just as the Lord blessed the seventh day when he finished his work. 'As the Lord commanded Moses' is repeated seven times, recalling the repetition of phrasing in the creation of the world over the seven-day period. In Ex. 40:34-38 the Sabbath is celebrated just as God celebrated the Sabbath at the end of creation. See Moye, p. 597. See also Weinfeld, who relates God's creation of the world and rest on the Sabbath (Gn. 1) to the building of the Tabernacle and God's presence resting in it.

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transcends the division between the sexes and that both men and women share fully in the image of God.

Valerie Karras, 'Male domination of Women in the writings of St John Chrysostom', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* Vol. 36 No. 2, Summer 1991

Continuing the theme of patristic attitudes to relations between the sexes, Karras's article contends that Chrysostom believed that the subjection of women to men was not part of the created order but a result of the fall. She notes that Chrysostom believed the purpose of this subjection was so that men could guide women to God, and that if a woman should prove to be a better spiritual guide than a man, this should be accepted, even though it subverted the normal order of things.

Helmut Koester, 'Writings and the Spirit: Authority and Politics in Ancient Christianity', *Harvard Theological Review* 84:4, October 1991

The question of how the NT writings came to be recognized as having authority is one that is of enormous importance, and in this article Koester gives his reconstruction of how it happened. As he sees it, in the earliest days of the church the epistles and gospels had authority because they helped to create and maintain the worldwide Christian community. It was not until the time of Clement and Origen that these writings came to be seen as verbally inspired and as being linked to the authority of the apostles. A provocative article which evangelicals should read, if only to stimulate their own thinking about this vital issue.

Alvyn Petterson, 'The Arian Context of Athanasius of Alexandria's Tomus ad Antiochenos vii', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41:2, April 1992, and 'The Laity — Bishop's Pawn? Ignatius of Antioch on the Obedient Christian', *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 44 No. 1, 1991

In these two revisionist articles Petterson maintains that Athanasius's tome was not directed against Apollinarius but was aimed against the Arian heresy in order to help sort out problems within the church at Antioch, and that Ignatius's teaching about episcopacy is not concerned with the laity merely being the pawns of the bishops but with both bishops and laity imitating and embodying the perfect obedience of Christ.

Joseph W. Trigg, 'The Angel of Great Council: Christ and the angelic hierarchy in Origen's thought', *Journal of Theological Studies* Vol. 42 Part 1, April 1991

This fascinating study by Trigg explores the angeology of Origen and explains how Origen held, on the basis of Isaiah 9:6, that Christ himself took the place of a guardian angel for spiritually advanced Christians such as himself, and how he believed that his authority as a biblical interpreter rested on the direct access to Christ he possessed as a result of this fact.

D.H. Williams, 'The early career and exile of Hilary of Poitiers', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Vol. 42 No. 2, April 1991

Hilary of Poitiers is often described as the 'Athanasius of the west', but in this article Williams argues that, contrary to hagiographic tradition, Hilary's exile in 356 was not due to his opposition to Arianism and that in fact he only became a supporter of Nicene orthodoxy after his exile had begun.

Reformation

Marvin W. Anderson, 'Vista Tigurina: Peter Martyr and European Reform (1556–1562)', *Harvard Theological Review* 83:2, April 1990

This article by Anderson examines the influence exerted by Peter Martyr from his base in Zürich on the Reformation in England through his lectures on Samuel and his defence of Cranmer's eucharistic doctrine, and on the Reformation in Poland through his advice on how to defend Trinitarian orthodoxy in the face of a rebirth of Arianism. An interesting reminder of the international character of Reformed theology and of the important role played by the secondary figures of the Reformation.

Roger Beckwith, 'Thomas Cranmer after five hundred years', *Churchman* Vol. 104 No. 1, 1990

This article, written to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Cranmer's work, gives a lucid and comprehensive account of Cranmer's career and achievements. An excellent starting point for anyone approaching Cranmer for the first time.

Joel R. Beeke, 'Faith and assurance in the Heidelberg Catechism and its primary composers', *Calvin Theological Journal* Vol. 27 No. 1, April 1992

R.T. Kendall's seminal thesis on *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* argued that theologians such as Theodore Beza and William Perkins departed from the teaching of John Calvin in their doctrines of faith and assurance. Beeke re-examines Kendall's argument, using the Heidelberg Catechism and its chief authors Ursinus and Olevianus as his starting point. His conclusion is that: '. . . notwithstanding differences in matters of degree on the doctrines of faith and assurance between Calvin, the HC and its primary authors, there is scant variation in substance'. An article of interest to those studying the development of the Reformed tradition.

Charles M. Cameron, 'Arminius — Hero or Heretic?', *Evangelical Quarterly* Vol. LXIV No. 3, July 1992

From time to time theologians attempt to rehabilitate a theological villain. This is the exercise engaged in by Cameron in this article on that arch-villain to all good Calvinists, Jacobus Arminius. After comparing Arminius' teaching with the traditional five points of Calvinism, Cameron concludes that Arminius is a theologian who can help us hold a biblical balance between God's grace and human faith and who '. . . invites us to have confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ without becoming over-confident in any particular interpretation, such as inflexible "Calvinism" or superficial "Arminianism" '.

Steven G. Ellis, 'Economic problems of the Church: why the Reformation failed in Ireland', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41:2, April 1992

One of the intriguing questions about the Anglican Reformation is why it so signally failed in Ireland. In this article Ellis argues convincingly that economic factors may have had a large part to play in this failure. He argues that the church in Ireland lacked the resources necessary to support an effective preaching ministry and that the wealthy English gentry and merchants in Ireland who were alienated from the English government preferred to spend their money to support Catholic priests and services. A salutary reminder that an effective ministry needs to be paid for!

R.M. Hawkes, 'The Logic of Assurance in English Puritan Theology', *The Westminster Theological Journal* Vol. 52:2, Fall 1990

A question central to Puritan theology was how the believer could know that he or she was one of the elect. This article by Hawkes explains how the answer to this question took the form of a spiral of assurance in which the good works issuing from faith showed the believer that God's grace was at work in their life and this in turn led to further good works in response to this grace. An important article for anyone seeking to understand Puritan theology and spirituality.

Randall C. Zachman, 'Jesus Christ as the image of God in Calvin's theology', *Calvin Theological Journal* Vol. 25 No. 1, April 1990

In this fascinating article Zachman argues that the heart of Calvin's Christology lies in the idea of Jesus Christ as 'the image of God the Father in whom alone the Father is represented and made known to sinners', and that this understanding of Christ enables Calvin to hold in unity the person and work of Christ, God as Creator and God as Redeemer and a traditional Chalcedonian Christology with a Spirit Christology.

Enlightenment and Modern

D.W. Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism in modern Scotland', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* Vol. 9 No. 1, Spring 1991

In this article Bebbington surveys the origins and development of Evangelicalism in Scotland since the 18th century and concludes that this history shows that the idea that Western society has steadily become less important since the Reformation is invalid, since 'Church attendance and the Christian tone of society at large both increased during the nineteenth century'. The moral he draws from this is that secularization is not irreversible and that the Evangelicalism that transformed Scotland in the past may do so again.

S.J. Brown, 'Reform, reconstruction, reaction: the social vision of Scottish Presbyterianism *c.*1830–*c.*1930', *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 44 No. 4, 1991

In another article on Scottish church history, Brown explains how members of the Scottish Presbyterian churches developed a '... new social vision, based less upon the reform and conversion of individuals, and more upon the reform of social structures' in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. He then further argues that this vision was lost amidst the preparations for the union of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church in 1929 and concludes that 'the Union of the Presbyterian Churches in 1929 was achieved at the cost of their social influence'.

Graham Cole, 'Theological Utilitarianism and the eclipse of the theistic sanction', *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.2, 1991

A question that any form of Christian ethical theory has to face is why one should behave in a morally acceptable fashion. In this article Cole looks at a group of 18th-century theologians who sought to provide an answer to this question. Cole notes particularly that the 'theistic sanction', the threat of divine retribution after death, was central to their account of why one should be moral: 'Those who base their life on self-interest may have temporal success, but eternal woe is coming.' Cole's article is interesting not only as a historical study but because it raises the issue of how the contemporary Christian ethicist can justify moral behaviour in a world where the idea of divine retribution has become increasingly discounted.

K.R. Morris, 'The Puritan Roots of American Universalism', *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 44 No. 4, 1991

Orthodox Calvinism seems an unlikely seed bed for a universalist theology, and yet in this article Morris argues persuasively that this was in fact the case in New England in the late-17th and early-18th centuries. As he sees it, the revivals that took place in this period challenged the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement because: 'If anyone could respond to an altar call, then anyone could become a Christian; therefore Christ's atonement was for all. Since Christ's work on the Cross was believed to have been a literal substitution for sinners, and revivalism's implied general atonement says that salvation was for everyone, the commonsense conclusion, to which many believers came, was universal salvation.' An important article which raises once again the perennial issue tackled by J.I. Packer in *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* of how to combine theologically a strong belief in election with an equally strong enthusiasm for the universal proclamation of the gospel.

Michael Root, 'Schleiermacher as Innovator and Inheritor; God, Dependence and Election', *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 43 No. 1, 1990

As 'the father of modern theology', Schleiermacher is generally seen as a theological innovator. However, in this important article Root argues convincingly that he was '... a surprisingly dutiful son of the Western theological tradition'. Specifically, Root contends that his understanding of the relationship between God and the world as one of 'absolute dependence' represents an attempt to 'think through to the end' the consequences of a strict Augustinian–Calvinist doctrine of election.

David Samuel, 'Evangelicals and History', *Churchman* Vol. 106 No. 3, 1992

In this article Samuel argues that at their conference at Keele in 1967 Anglican evangelicals took a decision to renounce previous evangelical history and start all over again. He further maintains that this was a mistake because both Scripture and church history teach us that we need to take history seriously and because the repudiation of their history has left Anglican evangelicals 'a prey to novelty and passing fashion'. A controversial article, but one that needs to be pondered by anyone seeking to assess the state of evangelicalism in the Church of England.

John Wilson, 'An appraisal of C.S. Lewis and his influence on modern Evangelicalism', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* Vol. 9 No. 1, Spring 1991

Almost 30 years after his death, the work of C.S. Lewis remains as popular and influential as ever. In this interesting article, which would be a good starting point for anyone approaching Lewis for the first time, Wilson looks at 'Lewis the man, his theology and apologetics', and then attempts 'an appraisal and discussion of his influence'. Wilson's conclusion is that Lewis may have been sent by God '... to undermine intellectual prejudices and open the way for the preachers', and that '... the growth of evangelicalism in the past 30 years may owe more to Lewis than is generally recognised'.