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The Delight of Wisdom¹

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It was a typical cloudy English day, a sprinkle of rain, like a mist which pushes your eyes down as you bike to the library, but for some reasons I saw him, a combination of two images of antiquated Cambridge: an old rusty bicycle and an even older don dressed in his academic robes, squeaking their way somewhere at breakneck speed. I stopped my own bicycle, there on Grange Road, struck by the odd spectacle and pondered: 'I wonder where he's going in such a hurry?' That night over dinner a junior fellow from Christ's College filled me in on the secret of the dons, informing me that the old professor was on his way to the Senate House for a vote. What happened that day in the Senate House had profound implications for Western culture in general and little did I know as I sat beside the road how much reflection still lay ahead for me to grasp the significance of that day. The resources for understanding this significance would be found close at hand in my Hebrew Bible, in the portrait of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs, one of the most vivid of all depictions of wisdom in the Bible.

I. Wisdom and Old Testament theology

There is little question that Lady Wisdom has often been misunderstood and mishandled in the writing of theologies of the OT, that is, summaries of the thought found in the Hebrew Bible,² a discipline that has engrossed OT and Hebrew Bible scholars since Philip Gabler initiated (or at least delineated more carefully) this discipline in the late 18th century.³ As one reads through the wisdom literature, whether that is the practical

¹ This article is a revised version of my Inaugural Lecture in the Chair of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada (14 November 2003).

² On the relationship between Wisdom and OT Theology see J.F. Priest, 'Where is Wisdom to Be Placed?' in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* ed. J. Crenshaw, (New York: KTAV, 1976), 281–88; W. Zimmerli, 'The Place and Limit of Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology', in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* ed. J. Crenshaw, (New York: KTAV, 1976), 314–26; B.K. Waltke, 'The Book of Proverbs and Old Testament Theology', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136 (1979): 302–317; R. Murphy, 'Religious Dimensions of Israelite Wisdom', in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* ed. P.D. Miller Jr., P.D. Hanson, and S.D. McBride, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 452–56; R.E. Murphy, 'Can the Book of Proverbs Be a Player in "Biblical Theology"?' *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 31 (2001), 4–9.

³ See an English translation of Gabler's lecture in B.C. Ollenburger, E.A. Martens, and G.F. Hasel, *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology: A Reader in Twentieth-century Old Testament Theology, 1930–1990* Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1991). For its significance see G.F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic issues in the current debate* (4th ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991) as well as J. Sandys-Wunsch and L. Eldridge, 'J.P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of his Originality', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 (1980): 133–58; M. Saebø, 'Johann Philipp Gabler at the End of the Eighteenth Century: History and Theology', in *On the way to canon: Creative tradition history in the Old Testament* ed. M. Saebø; Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 310–26; L.T. Stuckenbruck, 'Johann Philipp Gabler and the Delineation of Biblical Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52 (1999): 139–55.

guidance of Proverbs or philosophical reflection of Ecclesiastes, Job and Song of Songs, there is a tone distinct from much of the other literature in the OT. Here one finds little of the emphasis on covenant which predominates the narrative and prophetic literature of ancient Israel. There are scarce whispers of the great redemptive events beginning with the choosing of Abraham and continuing through the exodus, conquest, monarchy, exile and restoration. In contrast wisdom literature places creation theology at its centre.⁴

And so for many the relationship between the two, wisdom and redemptive-covenant, remains uncertain. Lady Wisdom is clearly misunderstood and is seen by some even as an enemy of redemptive-covenant, and such confusion is reflected in or possibly caused by the bifurcation of our own worldview into the sacred and secular.

Lady Wisdom's cry, however, rises above the covenant negotiations of Abraham and God, above the crashing waves at the Red Sea, the thunderous raucous at Mount Sinai, the trumpet blasts at Jericho, the tambourines of David's praise, the passionate woes of the prophets, the masons of Zerubbabel's temple, above the powerful roar of the grand narrative, the biblical story. And we find her voice in the foundational chapters of the book of Proverbs.

II. Lady Wisdom

In Proverbs 1-9 two main images are employed to encourage people to embrace wisdom.⁵ The one image is drawn from the parent-child relationship, as we hear the cry: 'Listen my child to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.' At certain points however, the voice of the parent encourages the child to pursue wisdom:

Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honour you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown (Prov. 4:7b-9).⁶

Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister', and call insight your intimate friend (Prov. 7:4). Such calls from the parent to the child reveal a second major image complex in

⁴ See R.E. Murphy, 'Wisdom and Creation', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985): 3-11.

⁵ See R.C. Van Leeuwen, 'Liminality and Worldview in Proverbs 1-9', *Semeia* 50 (1990): 111-44 for a superb review of approaches to the 'root metaphor' in Proverbs 1-9, including N.C. Habel, 'The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9', *Interpretation* 26 (1972): 131-57 and C.V. Camp, 'Woman Wisdom as Root Metaphor: A Theological Consideration', in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy* ed. K.G. Hoglund and R.E. Murphy; *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 45-76. The question is whether it is necessary to isolate a root metaphor and instead recognise diversity in the imagery. Such an endeavour appears similar to the search for root lexical meaning for ancient words (as criticised by J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1968]).

⁶ Translations in this paper are from the New Revised Standard Version.

Proverbs 1–9, that of Lady Wisdom.⁷ We first hear Lady Wisdom's voice in Proverbs 1:20–32.⁸ There she calls aloud in the street, raises her voice in the public squares, at the head of the noisy streets and in the gateways of the city, reminding us that to listen to her will mean safety, no fear of harm (1:33).⁹ She appears again in the closing chapters of the prologue to the book of Proverbs, in chapter eight¹⁰ where again she cries out 'On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads ... beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals' (8:2). In this, the longest speech of Lady Wisdom, she extols her own virtues as better than silver, gold and jewels for 'all that you may desire cannot compare with her' (8:11). She then declares her role in culture, providing guidance for kings, rulers and nobles, and reveals her existence before creation and her role in creation as God's 'master worker' (8:30).¹¹ There she declares: 'I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race' (8:30).

This intimate self-exposure of her role past and present, sets up the final chapter before we encounter verse upon verse of short pithy proverbial wisdom that we often associate with the book of Proverbs.

As in both previous encounters with Lady Wisdom we are greeted initially with her cry call. Proverbs 9 is constructed in chiasmic form, that is, the second half of the chapter is a mirror of the first, an inversion in which similar elements are presented but in reverse order.¹² One sees immediately how the first (9:1–6) and last (9:13–18) stanzas of this

- ⁷ For the effect of engendering wisdom as a woman see J.S. Webster, 'Sophia: Engendering Wisdom in Proverbs, Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 78 (1998): 63–79; C.V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Bible and literature series; Sheffield, England: Almond, 1985); Camp, 'Root Metaphor', 45–76. On this image also see Habel, 'Symbolism', 131–57. Some see here an allusion to a bride (e.g. Webster), while others (e.g. Habel) argue that the imagery is rather one who guards the traveller and exalts and crowns her devotees.
- ⁸ Interestingly 'wisdom' here and in Prov. 9:1 is in the plural (although not in Prov. 8). The plural has been explained as a plural of intensity or abstract; cf. R.E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 8.
- ⁹ See R.E. Murphy, 'Wisdom's Song: Proverbs 1:20–33', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 456–60.
- ¹⁰ For claims for ancient origins of this metaphor contrast R.N. Whybray, 'Proverbs 8:22–31 and Its Supposed Prototypes', *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965): 504–514 and M.J. Dahood, 'Proverbs 8:22–31: Translation and Commentary', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968): 512–21. For this passage also see J.-N. Aletti, 'Proverbes 8:22–31. Étude de structure', *Biblica* 57 (1976): 25–37; M. Gilbert, 'Le discours de la Sagesse en Proverbes 8', in *Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament* ed. M. Gilbert, (Gembloux: Duculot, 1981), 202–218; G.A. Yee, 'An Analysis of Proverbs 8:22–31 according to Style and Structure', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 94 (1982): 58–66; D.H. Williams, 'Proverbs 8:22–31', *Interpretation* 48 (1994): 275–79.
- ¹¹ Such language led many Christians to see here a reference to the second or third persons of the Trinity. See various views and problems in Williams, 'Proverbs 8:22–31', 277–78.
- ¹² I am well aware of the danger of finding chiasmic structures behind every bush, M.J. Boda, 'Chiasmus in Ubiquity: Symmetrical Mirages in Nehemiah 9', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 71 (1996): 55–70. However, there is no question that one finds here this rhetorical technique. See also R.W. Byargeon, 'The Structure and Significance of Proverbs 9:7–12', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997): 367–75. The effect of such chiasmic structuring is explained by Byargeon as first to call into question previous claims of misplaced text and, secondly, (citing Watson) to 'link the components of a strophe', and, thirdly (especially 9:10), 'to be a hinge between the two proximal parts of Proverbs 9 (1–6, 13–18)', p. 371. The LXX (followed by Syriac) text of Proverbs 9 is extremely expansionistic; cf. R.J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A commentary* (Old Testament Library; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 102.

chapter are focused on two female figures who share much in common, Lady Wisdom and Woman Folly.¹³ They both possess a house and call 'from the highest point in the town' to invite the 'simple' to dine, spreading a meal with both drink and food.¹⁴ Such points of contact which draw these two figures together simultaneously serve as points of contrast. While we are only told in passing that Woman Folly has a house, we are told that Wisdom has built her own house, hewing her seven pillars,¹⁵ an allusion most likely to a grand house, a mansion whose construction has been superintended by Wisdom herself.¹⁶ Wisdom is portrayed as the quintessential banquet director: slaughtering animals, mixing wine, setting tables, organising a workforce of servant-girls who blanket the city to invite guests to enjoy a rich meal of both meat and wine.¹⁷ What a contrast to Folly who merely 'sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the high places of the town' offering a simple meal of bread and water whose origins are in question. The greatest contrast, however, comes in the final verse of each section. While Lady Wisdom honestly offers her guests life, Woman Folly deceitfully leads her simpletons into the pit of death. Although, on the surface, there are many similarities between these two women, a closer look reveals the stark contrast.¹⁸

What lies between these two depictions of Wisdom and Folly is a section that for many years Hebrew scholars considered a later addition to Proverbs 9.¹⁹ However, verses 7–12 are essential to the message of this chapter for they highlight further the contrast between wisdom and folly,²⁰ now exemplified in the lives of those who accept the invitations of the two women.²¹ The one who accepts wisdom's invitation is called 'the wise' ... the one who accepts folly's invitation is called 'the scoffer'. The first one is obvious, to dine with wisdom means to attain the title of wise. The second, the scoffer, is often depicted as the worst of the many characters of folly in the Hebrew wisdom

13 Interestingly Woman Folly is closely associated with the 'strange woman' who appears regularly in Proverbs 1–9, see Williams, 'Proverbs 8:22–31', 278–79; Byargeon, 'Proverbs 9:7–12', 373; Webster, 'Sophia', 65–69. Webster also notes a similar relationship between Lady Wisdom and the 'good wife' (cf. 31:10–31). Further on the 'strange woman' see G.A. Yee, 'I Have Perfumed my Bed with Myrrh': The Foreign Woman (iššā zārā) in Proverbs 1–9', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43 (1989).

14 While there may be double entendre at play (both food and sexuality) in the invitation of Woman Folly.

15 On the seven pillars see P.W. Skehan, 'The Seven Columns of Wisdom's House in Proverbs 1–9', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 9 (1947): 190–98; J.C. Greenfield, 'The Seven Pillars of Wisdom (Proverbs 9:1) – A Mistranslation?' *Jewish Quarterly Review* 76 (1985): 13–20; B. Lang, 'Die Sieben Säulen der Weisheit (Sprüche IX 1) im Licht Israelitischer Architektur', *Vetus Testamentum* 33 (1983): 488–91 and the superb review of various theories by R.N. Whybray, *Proverbs* (New Century Bible; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 142–43.

16 See Clifford, *Proverbs*, 105–106.

17 See J.E. McKinlay, 'To Eat or Not To Eat: Where is wisdom in this choice?' *Semeia* 86 (1999): 77–79, for comparison and contrast of the meals of Wisdom and Folly. The attempts of Clifford and Lichtenstein to link these meals to Ugaritic texts merely catalogue the semantic range of meal language, rather than establish literary or religious dependence; cf. M. Lichtenstein, 'The Banquet Motif in Keret and in Proverbs 9', *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 1 (1968): 19–31; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 103–104.

18 These thoughts are echoed in Byargeon, 'Proverbs 9:7–12', 373–374.

19 See a review of this in R.E. Murphy and E. Huwiler, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 43; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 141–42; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 102, 106–107.

20 See Byargeon, 'Proverbs 9:7–12', 367–75. The appearance of the first person singular suffix ('by me') in 9:11 suggests that the centre section is spoken by Lady Wisdom herself.

21 This link is also noted by Byargeon, 'Proverbs 9:7–12', 373–74.

literature, for while the others portray foolish behaviour, the scoffer goes on the offensive and mocks the very system of wisdom itself. Verses 7–9 identify the posture of the two ways: while the scoffer resists any instruction, hating and abusing those who would dare to correct, the wise gladly accept it, loving those who would add to their learning. While the posture of the wise is one of humble pursuit, that of the scoffer is arrogant rejection of wisdom.

Verses 11–12 highlight the rewards of the two ways. Wisdom offers long and abundant life to those who pursue her way. The reverse is implicit: those who reject her and so embrace Folly, set themselves up for misery and as verse 18 says, 'death'.

In the first and last sections of this chapter we observe contrasting feminine figures and in the second and second from last sections we observe their contrasting ways. What lies at the centre of this passage, however, is a statement that provides an orientation essential to the acquisition of wisdom and simultaneously heals the rift between wisdom and covenant.²² For there we find: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight' (9:10). Similar phrases are found in each of the core wisdom books (see especially Prov. 1:7; Eccles. 12:13; Job 28:28; cf. Prov. 1:29; 2:5; 15:33; cf. 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:16; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 31:30; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; Eccles. 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12, 13).

If this 'fear of the Lord' is the beginning of wisdom, what is this 'fear'? The answer to this lies in the use of the 'fear of the Lord' elsewhere in the OT. Although one can find the 'fear of the Lord' in several places in the OT, a particular body of literature is fixated with this concept. This 'fear' is mentioned 25 times in the book of Deuteronomy and the literature it spawned.²³ An exemplary passage is Deuteronomy 10:12, 20:

So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul ... You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast.

This 'fear' is initially the human reaction to God's awesome presence and glory and refers to the awe and reverence afforded the Holy One of Israel. However, in covenant literature this becomes equated with submissive and faithful worship of the Lord. It becomes a term for the faith posture of the ancient Israelites towards the Lord who saved them. It is the human response in the divine-human covenant relationship. To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind is the same as to fear the Lord (see Deut. 6:1–5). Thus the 'fear of the Lord' is a relational term signifying the Israelites' response to God's grace displayed in salvation (especially the Exodus). As Walter Brueggemann has aptly written, it means:

²² For the key role of this phrase in Proverbs 9, see Byargeon, 'Proverbs 9:7–12', 375, who notes 'the emphasis on the 'fear of Yahweh' is at the centre of the chiasm in 9:7–12 and also in the centre of Proverbs 9, for the decision between Wisdom and Folly ultimately rests on whether one fears Yahweh'. On the definition of the 'fear of the Lord', see Waltke, 'Proverbs', 302–317; cf. W. Brueggemann, 'Praise to God is the end of wisdom: What is the beginning?' *Journal for Preachers* 12 (1989): 30–40.

²³ See the extensive list in M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972): Deut. 4:10; 5:26; 6:2, 13, 24; 8:6; 10:12, 20; 13:5 [4]; 14:23; 17:19; 28:58; 31:12, 13; Josh. 4:24; 24:14; Judg 6:10; 1 Sam. 12:14, 24; 1 Kgs 8:40, 43//2 Chr. 6:31, 33; 2 Kgs 17:7, 25; 28; 37–39, 41; Jer. 32:39. The object always is YHWH.

to take God with *utmost seriousness* as the premise and perspective from which life is to be discerned and lived. That 'utmost seriousness' requires attentiveness to some things rather than others, to spend one's energies in response to this God who has initiated our life.²⁴

If this phrase 'fear of the Lord' is a covenant term, a relational term and thus a faith term, we can now see the intimate relationship between covenant literature in the OT and wisdom literature. Rather than wisdom literature standing in contrast to covenant literature, wisdom is actually based on covenant and serves to enhance covenant. Wisdom assumes the covenant base and moves forward not only to respond to covenant, but also to bring the principles of covenant to bear on all of life. Rather than being in opposition to covenant and to the salvation-story work of God, it represents the ultimate goal of salvation and covenant: the transformation of all of life by God's redeemed people. Wisdom literature, with its heavy emphasis on creation theology, rather than being an embarrassing appendage to OT theology is the highest expression of God's purposes: to redeem creation and culture to himself through his transformed and transforming people.

III. Wisdom in a Post-foundational World

The old don who blindly passed me a few minutes before 2pm on 16 May 1992²⁵ on Grange Road was speeding to a vote in the Senate House on whether to approve an honorary doctorate for the great Algerian-born French scholar Jacques Derrida. Derrida, the man who had turned the academic community upside down and had become inseparably linked to what has come to be known as 'Deconstructionism', a contributing movement to post-structural, post-foundational, and/or postmodern epistemologies. Derrida, along with many others challenged the reigning paradigm of academia and his influence has been immense. What many dons at Cambridge found disconcerting about Derrida was that his views were considered diametrically opposed to the very essence of the scientific project pursued at Cambridge, begging the question: how can one honour a man who undermines the foundations of modern investigation?

And so my friend, the junior fellow at Christ's filled me in on the vote. The 540 dons voted physically: with those in favour on one side of the ancient auditorium and those opposed on the other. Facing each other, the bodies were counted and the vote was decisive: 336–204, in Derrida's favour. The Frenchman would receive the British honour, even if begrudgingly bestowed, but the vote revealed something far greater, that is, the beginning of an admission that the rules of engagement in the university and cultural setting needed revisiting and revision.

There were those who protested this vote like Quine and Marcus who accused Derrida of work that 'does not meet accepted standards of clarity and rigor' and which

²⁴ Brueggemann, 'Beginning', 30, italics original.

²⁵ I did not record this date myself at the time, but was happy to find the date in K.J. Vanhooser, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) and the time in *The Times*, 'A Storm in the Cloisters' (9 May 1992, p. 12).

is composed of 'tricks and gimmicks similar to those of the Dadaists',²⁶ but in general there was an acceptance that no matter what one thinks of Derrida he represents an important milestone in the journey of western culture and thought. In his own reflections on the Cambridge vote, Derrida would later see himself as part of a:

re-examination of the fundamental norms and premises of a number of dominant discourses, the principles underlying many of their evaluations, the structures of academic institutions, and the research that goes on within them.²⁷

He continues: 'What this kind of questioning does is modify the rules of the dominant discourse, it tries to politicise and democratise the university scene.' Among other things Derrida (and others of like mind) reminded many of the role that presuppositions play in the pursuit of knowledge.²⁸ Such an admission has the potential to open up a new way of dialogue within the sphere of the university which is a microcosm of the broader cultural universe.

The impact of this shift is evident in the essay of John Polanyi in the Canadian *Globe and Mail* a few years ago entitled: 'Quest for a truly social science'. In this article the Canadian Nobel prize winning chemist reminded the scientific community of the 'moral force of science' that can more actively support both democracy and human rights around the globe, a thought he admits 'would have seemed preposterous when I began my life as a scientist'.²⁹ It also is displayed in Vaclav Havel's speech at Independence Hall in Philadelphia (4 July 1994) which bemoaned science's 'unconditional faith in objective reality' which has led to a 'state of schizophrenia' in which humanity as observers becomes entirely 'alienated' from themselves as beings.³⁰ The way ahead according to Havel is a greater 'awareness that we are not here alone nor for ourselves alone, but that we are an integral part of higher, mysterious entities against whom it is not advisable to blaspheme'.

In an ironic way, I find in these trends within the larger scientific and philosophic communities of our world the whispers of Lady Wisdom, a call to affirm rather than to ignore our deepest personal and religious sensibilities in the pursuit of knowledge. So Lady Wisdom called to me on Grange Road as I sought to understand my place within that grand university which was only representative of a much larger cultural enterprise

²⁶ Published 9 May 1992 as a letter to the editor ('Derrida Degree a Question of Honour') in *The Times* (p. 13) and signed by Hans Albert, David Armstrong, Ruth Barcan Marcus, Keith Campbell, Richard Glauser, Rudolf Haller, Massimo Mugnai, Kevin Mulligan, Lorenzo Pena, Willard van Orman Quine, Wolfgang Rod, Edmund Runggaldier, Karl Schuhmann, Daniel Schulthess, Peter Simons, Barry Smith, Rene Thom, Dallas Willard, Jan Wolenski.

²⁷ 'Honoris Causa: "This is also extremely funny"', tr. by Marian Hobson and Christopher Johnson, in *Points ... Interviews 1974-1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 399-421.

²⁸ For a basic orientation to the impact of post structural thought on Christian hermeneutics see S.E. Fowl and L.G. Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); J.R. Middleton and B.J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than it Used To Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995); S.J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Vanhoozer, *Meaning*; S.J. Grenz and J.R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

²⁹ John Polanyi, 'Quest for a truly social science', *Globe and Mail* (Saturday, April 29, 2000), A15.

³⁰ V. Havel, 'The Need for Transcendence in the Postmodern World', *The Futurist* (July-August 1995): 47; V. Havel, 'The New Measure of Man', *New York Times* (July 8, 1994): A27; see also V. Havel, 'The End of the Modern Era', *New York Times* (1 March 1992): E15.

within our world. Such a call leads me to ask with Tertullian, 'what does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?'³¹ In contrast to Tertullian, Lady Wisdom appears to think 'everything', for she consistently reminds us of her public character. She takes her place at a location of prominence and influence within the culture, crying out 'in the street, in the squares ... at the busiest corner ... at the entrance of the city gates' (1:20-21), shouting 'on the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads ... beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals' (8:2-3), calling 'from the highest places in the town'. This reminds us that wisdom is something not only needed, but also found in the crossroads and high places of our culture. At the same time, however, Lady Wisdom reminds us of her theological character. She is a creation of God himself (8:22-29) and claims that her foundation is the fear of the Lord (1:28-29; 9:10). For us to embrace the vision and mission of wisdom is to embrace covenantal relationship with God.

These two aspects of Lady Wisdom's character (public context, covenantal relationship) are often seen at odds for those within the biblical tradition, a tension expressed by Jesus in John 17 when he prayed that his followers would be 'in the world' and yet not 'of the world'. Some resolve this tension by retreating into a fundamentalism that eschews dialogue, others by embracing a bifurcation that divides secular (public) from sacred (private) spheres. Lady Wisdom brooks no resolution as she passionately embraces creation and culture based on the fear of the Lord. She reveals her involvement in the design of creation and culture and announces her joy in the inhabited world and delight in the human race, while never compromising on the fear of the Lord.

Wisdom reminds us that our pursuit of knowledge and understanding not only can, but should be set within the context of our religious commitments, our theological convictions. We pursue knowledge and understanding as those who bear the image of God who created wisdom and understanding. This is a necessity for those participating in contexts sharing a common confession, but also for those from the biblical tradition who seek to participate in the larger cultural conversation. This also means that our pursuit of knowledge within our cultural institutions must remain open to dialogue. In a post-foundational world we have the opportunity to embrace a level of dialogue that admits we all have convictions that are worthy of exploration. Such exploration is only possible as we all participate in the conversation, rather than create boundaries which insulate us from one another. Wisdom warns us not to flee from the public to the private, but rather to accept the invitation to engage in public discourse and academic pursuit, not only bringing wisdom to bear upon such discourse and pursuit; but also embracing wisdom wherever she may be found.

³¹ *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7.9.

Were Old Covenant Believers Indwelt by the Holy Spirit?

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Introduction¹

The Gospel of John states, 'Unless one is born of water and spirit, he is not able to enter the Kingdom of God' (John 3:5).² Later in John we read that the Spirit will not be received until after Jesus is glorified (7:39). If the Spirit is not received until after the cross, could Nicodemus have experienced the new birth from above prior to the cross? Did the old covenant remnant experience the new birth by the Spirit?³ Were individual members of the old covenant remnant indwelt by the Spirit? This essay seeks to provide an answer to these questions.

The first task in addressing these issues will be to summarise the range of possible solutions to this riddle. Once the scholarly landscape has been surveyed, that landscape will be evaluated against the evidence. Placing the evidence under the lens of biblical theology entails first asking whether or not the OT indicates that its faithful were indwelt. A whole-Bible approach to the question also demands that the NT come under the microscope, so we will place John 7:39 on a slide and scrutinise it for indications of how the old covenant remnant may have experienced the Spirit. Having observed this data, what regeneration and indwelling signify in John's Gospel can be brought to bear on the question of whether or not the old covenant remnant was continually, individually indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Previous answers to the question

At least five positions have been taken on the issue of whether or not ordinary, individual members of the old covenant remnant were continually indwelt by the Spirit.

¹ This essay summarises the argument of my dissertation, 'He Is with You and He Will Be in You: The Spirit, the Believer, and the Glorification of Jesus' (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003). A revised version of the dissertation will be published as *Regeneration and Indwelling: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, forthcoming). Earlier versions of this article have been presented at Briercrest Bible College and Seminary in Canada on May 1, 2003, and at the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta on November 21, 2003. I am grateful for the helpful comments and interaction I received on both occasions.

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

³ For a study of the remnant in the OT, see G.F. Hasel, *The Remnant* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1972), 391. Hasel, however, does not raise the question of whether or not individual members of the old covenant remnant were indwelt.

Some scholars assume that a sixth position exists, but I am yet to find an affirmation of this sixth position. Here I will list the five real and one alleged positions, giving a brief description and listing major proponents of each.⁴

On the issue of the Spirit's role in the lives of believers, some scholars see basic continuity from the old to the new covenant. These authors argue that the old covenant remnant was both *regenerate* and *indwelt* by the Spirit. Adherents of this position include John Owen, B.B. Warfield, Sinclair Ferguson, Dan Fuller and Leon Wood.⁵

Another set of scholars agrees that old covenant believers experienced both regeneration and indwelling, but seek to incorporate texts like John 7:39 into their understanding by using language that allows for a greater or heightened experience of the Spirit under the new covenant. Nevertheless, these scholars see *no fundamental change* in the way believers experience the Spirit when the new covenant is inaugurated. Interpreters who can be placed here include Augustine, John Calvin, George Ladd, Dan Block and Wayne Grudem.⁶

The third position is the midpoint of the possible views. These scholars indicate that they see OT saints as regenerate by the Spirit but not indwelt by the Spirit. From statements in their writings, it seems best to place here Millard Erickson, J.I. Packer, Willem A. VanGemeren and Bruce Ware.⁷

The next position is for those who see the old covenant remnant as operated upon but not indwelt by the Spirit. Unlike those in the previous category, these scholars stop short of using the word regeneration with reference to the old covenant faithful. Articulators of this view include Martin Luther, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Craig Blasing, D.A.

⁴ For documentation and further discussion of these positions, see James M. Hamilton Jr, 'Old Covenant Believers and the Indwelling Spirit: A Survey of the Spectrum of Opinion', *TJ* 24 (2003), 37–54. I recognise that this categorisation is not perfectly symmetrical, but it matches the shape of the discussion. The value of position five has been questioned by a dispensationalist on the basis of there being no representatives of this position, but whether dispensationalists recognise it or not, they are often assumed to hold position five (see note 9 below). The value of position six, too, has been questioned, but commentators on John so commonly overlook the question this article addresses that position six is virtually standard among NT scholars. I remain convinced that these six positions accurately represent the ways scholars approach the dilemma.

⁵ John Owen, *The Doctrine of the Saints Perseverance Explained and Confirmed* [1654], vol. 11 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W.G. Goold (London: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850–53; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 331; B.B. Warfield, 'The Spirit of God in the OT', in *Biblical Doctrines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), esp. 121–28; Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 68; Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 229–30; Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 70, 85–86.

⁶ Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John* [ca. 416], 74.2 (trans. J. Gibb and J. Innes, in *Augustine*), NPNF, 7:334; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 429 [2.10.2], 458–59 [2.11.9]; G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 325–26; D.I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 2 vols, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 1998), 2:360–61; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 637.

⁷ M. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 992–95. J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1984); Packer, 'The Holy Spirit and His Work', *Crux* 23.2 (1987), 2–17; W.A. VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 81–82; B.A. Ware, 'Rationale for the Distinctiveness of the New Covenant Work of the Holy Spirit', paper presented at National ETS meeting, November 1988.

Carson and Michael Green.⁸

At the opposite end of the spectrum from those who affirm full continuity between the old and new covenant ministries of the Spirit would be those who affirm that the Spirit had nothing to do with the faithfulness of the old covenant remnant. Those who argue that OT saints were indwelt sometimes assume that this is the only alternative to their view, but I have not found anyone who takes this position.⁹

There are, however, a number of interpreters who stress the new nature of the Spirit's ministry after the Christ event but offer no explanation of how old covenant believers became and remained faithful. Here we find prominent dispensationalists such as Charles Ryrie and John Walvoord.¹⁰ Most scholars who have written on the Spirit from the perspective of NT theology fit here, as do several authors who have written both commentaries on John and studies specifically on the Spirit in John – C.K. Barrett, Raymond Brown and Gary Burge.¹¹

Before we continue, we should observe some interesting points regarding these positions. First, there are dispensationalists on both sides of this question. Leon Wood argues that old covenant believers were indwelt; Craig Blaising argues that they were not. Also, there are people who are soteriologically Calvinistic who argue that old covenant believers were not indwelt (Carson, Packer, Ware). This is noteworthy because those who argue that the old covenant remnant must have been indwelt usually do not agree with the Arminian understanding of prevenient grace and thus view sinners as dead and unable to respond. In their view, if OT saints were believers, they must have been indwelt. Finally, the position that the Holy Spirit had nothing to do with the faithfulness of the old covenant remnant is, at best, very rare. This point is significant because some scholars assume that this view is held, and it seems to be associated with dispensationalists.¹² I have found no one who either affirms or argues for that position.

We now turn to the OT, seeking to ascertain whether or not it indicates that its faithful were indwelt.

⁸ Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of John*, trans. M.H. Bertram, ed. J. Pelikan, vols 22 and 23 of *Luther's Works* (St Louis: Concordia, 1957), 22:248, see also 22:249, 23:278; L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993; originally published in 8 vols by Dallas Seminary Press, 1947–48], 6:72–74, 123, 7:265; C.A. Blaising and D.L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton: Bridgepoint, 1993), 156 (Blaising wrote this section, and Block communicated to me that he is comfortable with the term regeneration being applied to OT saints); D.A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 46–47; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 195, 329; M. Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 25–26.

⁹ 'There are two traditional views regarding the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the OT believer ... The first is that Old Testament believers experienced the indwelling ministry of the Spirit and the second is that they did not' (G. Fredricks, 'Rethinking the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Lives of Old Testament Believers', *JTS* 1 [1988]: 81). Cf. also Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 637: 'We should note that it sometimes is said that there was no work of the Holy Spirit *within* people in the Old Testament' (italics his).

¹⁰ C.C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), 41–42, 64–66; J.F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen, 1954), 71–73.

¹¹ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); idem, 'The Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel', *JTS* 1 (1950), 1–15; R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1966, 1970); Brown, 'The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 13 (1967), 113–32; and G.M. Burge, *John*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000); Burge, *The Anointed Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

¹² See D.I. Block, 'The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of RWV in the Book of Ezekiel', *JETS* 32 (1989), 40 n. 38, where he cites John F. Walvoord.

Indwelling in the Old Testament?

God does not dwell in his people in the OT, but he does dwell *among* them. This thesis is firmly supported by the usage of *ruach* (spirit) in the OT.¹³ Building on this conclusion, in this section I seek to establish three things: first, that the OT describes God dwelling in particular locations (e.g., Bethel, Mount Sinai, the tabernacle, the temple in Jerusalem); second, that in the OT the presence of the Spirit upon certain people marks those people out as extraordinary; and third, that the promises of a future outpouring of the Spirit indicate that the believing remnant does not possess the Spirit when the prophecies are made.

God's dwelling in the Old Testament

The OT does not describe God as dwelling *in* his chosen people, but it does describe him dwelling *with* them, in their midst.¹⁴ Throughout the OT Yahweh affirms to his people, 'I will be (or, am/have been) with you'. This statement is made regarding both prominent individuals¹⁵ and the nation as a whole.¹⁶ Not only does Yahweh declare that he is with his people, but at many points the people either express a desire for this, as in the statement, 'may Yahweh be with you', or they make an outright affirmation that, 'Yahweh is with you'.¹⁷ In some accounts the narrator inserts into his comments the statement that Yahweh was with someone.¹⁸ I have found some 108 affirmations of this nature peppered throughout the Torah (Law), the Neviim (Prophets), and the Ketuvim (Writings).¹⁹

Once the chosen people have become a nation, after the exodus from Egypt has taken place, God's presence with the people is realised as he dwells in the tabernacle. He commands that the tabernacle be built 'so that he may dwell among the people' (Exod. 25:8). Later in Israel's history the temple will be built, and subsequent OT texts assume that Yahweh is to be found at the temple in Jerusalem.

¹³ For a semantic classification of all 389 uses of *ruach* in BHS, see the appendix, 'The Semantic Range of *RUACH*', in James M. Hamilton Jr, 'God with Men in the Torah', *WTJ* 65 (2003), 131–33.

¹⁴ See my article, 'God with Men in the Torah', *WTJ* 65 (2003), 113–33; and another study that is in preparation, 'God with Men in the Prophets and the Writings'.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g., Gen. 26:3, 24; 28:15; 31:3; 46:4; Exod. 3:12; 4:12, 15; Josh. 1:5; 3:7; Judg. 6:16; 2 Sam. 7:9; 1 Kgs 11:38; 1 Chr. 17:8; Is. 41:10; 57:15; Jer. 1:8, 19; 15:20.

¹⁶ See Exod. 33:15–16; 2 Sam. 7:7; 1 Chr. 17:6 (2 Sam. 7:6–7 and 1 Chr. 17:5–6 place God's tent-dwelling in parallel with his presence with the nation); Is. 43:2, 5; Jer. 30:11; 42:11; 46:28; Ezek. 34:30; Hag. 1:13; 2:4.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Gen. 21:22; 26:28; 31:5; 35:3; 48:21; Exod. 18:19; Num. 14:9; 23:21; Deut. 2:7; 20:1, 4; 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:9, 17; 14:12; Judg. 6:12; Ruth 2:4; 1 Sam. 10:7; 16:18; 17:37; 20:13; 2 Sam. 7:3; 14:17; 1 Kgs 1:37; 8:57–58; 1 Chr. 17:2; 22:11, 16, 18; 28:20; 2 Chr. 15:2, 9; 19:6, 11; 20:17; 32:7–8; (35:21); 36:23; Ezra 1:3; Job 29:5; Pss 14:5; 16:8; 23:4; 42:8; 46:7, 11; 73:23; 94:14; 108:11; 139:18; Is. 7:14; 8:8, 10; 45:14; Jer. 20:11; Amos 5:14; Zech. 8:23; 10:5.

¹⁸ E.g. Gen. 39:2, 3, 21, 23; Josh. 6:27; Judg. 1:19, 22; 2:18; 1 Sam. 3:19; 18:12, 14, 28; 2 Sam. 5:10; 2 Kgs 18:7; 1 Chr. 9:20; 11:9; 2 Chr. 1:1; 17:3.

¹⁹ For discussion of these direct 'I am with you' statements, as well as the many other ways that God's presence with his people is communicated in the OT, see the two studies referenced in note 9 above, 'God with Men in the Torah'; and 'God with Men in the Prophets and the Writings'.

This reality gives Israel's religion a localised quality. Indeed, they are to worship in Jerusalem and in Jerusalem alone (Deut. 12:5). After Solomon, Israel's kings are evaluated by how they regard the temple in Jerusalem.²⁰ The statement in 2 Kings 16:18 that Ahaz removed the house of Yahweh serves to condemn him. By contrast, Josiah's piety is demonstrated by his commitment to the upkeep of the temple (2 Kgs 22:3-6).²¹

Solomon was aware that God was not contained by the temple (1 Kgs 8:27); nevertheless, he fully expects Yahweh to be present in the temple (8:13). Further, he expects the righteous to pray 'toward the temple' because that is where Yahweh is (e.g., 8:44). Thus, when Hezekiah is in distress he goes to the temple to spread the threats of the Rabshakeh out before Yahweh (2 Kgs 19:14). Similarly, it is righteous of Daniel in exile to have windows 'opened toward Jerusalem' when he prays (Dan. 6:10; cf. 1 Kgs 8:48-49).

Solomon even seems to expect that God's presence with the people as he dwells in the temple, will have a sanctifying affect upon Israel. He prays at the dedication of the temple:

May Yahweh our God be with us (*immanu*) as he was with our fathers! May he neither forsake us nor abandon us, that he may incline our hearts to himself, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments and statutes and judgments just as he commanded our fathers (1 Kgs 8:57-58).²²

The OT does not indicate that God dwelt in his people by his Spirit, but it does indicate that God remained with his people by dwelling in the temple. Just as Solomon prayed that God would do by his presence in the temple (1 Kgs 8:57-58), his dwelling in the temple appears to incline the hearts of God's people to him. This explains such utterances as, 'Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere!' (Ps. 84:10).²³ Similarly, wrestling with the apparent happiness of the wicked, the psalmist notes, 'This was troubling in my eyes, until I entered the sanctuary of God, then I

20 Cf. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols, OTL, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1962, 1965), 1:336: 'The Deuteronomistic theology of history ... measures the kings of Israel and Judah according to whether they recognised the Temple in Jerusalem as the one legitimate place of worship, or sacrificed on the "high places".'

21 W. Eichrodt writes, 'Loyalty to the holy place was thus to be equated with loyalty to the expression of the will of God in history' (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols, trans. J.A. Baker, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961, 1967], 1:107).

22 Pace Leon Wood, who wrongly claims, 'But nowhere does either the Old or New Testament ever speak of the Spirit ministering to Old Testament saints by simply being near them, rather than within them' (*The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], 86). If Wood were to object that in 1 Kgs 8:57-58 Yahweh, and not the Spirit, is ministering to the people by being with them, Hag. 2:5, where the prophet encourages the people with Yahweh's promise that 'my Spirit is standing in your midst', should settle the matter.

23 Psalm 84 is righteously obsessed with the temple, calling it lovely (84:1), longing, even fainting, to be there (84:2), blessing those who are always there (84:4). The point, however, is not the building, but the one who dwells in the building. Thus the temple is lovely *because* it is the dwelling place of Yahweh (84:1), the psalmist longs for the courts of Yahweh that he might sing for joy to the living God (84:2), and those who dwell in the temple are blessed because they are constantly singing God's praise (84:4). A day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere (84:10) *because* God is a favour-bestowing sun and shield who withholds no good thing (84:11). The psalmist's trust is in Yahweh not the temple (84:11), but as a member of the old covenant remnant, he must nevertheless access Yahweh *through* the temple and its cult.

perceived their end' (Ps. 73:16–17). Once the psalmist enters the temple, he realises the imminent destruction of Yahweh's enemies (73:17–20), the inappropriateness of his envy of the wicked (73:21–22), and the blessings of knowing God and being near to him (73:23–28). The turning point in the Psalm is the psalmist's entry into the sanctuary (73:17).

Extraordinary Spirit-anointings

The OT gives no explicit warrant for the claim that the believing remnant that lived prior to the cross was indwelt by the Holy Spirit.²⁴ When the OT describes an individual's experience of the Spirit, it is precisely the presence of the Spirit which marks that person out as exceptional. In other words, the Spirit comes on certain persons in the OT with the result that those persons are extraordinary. The corollary to this is that the Spirit does not come in power on ordinary members of the old covenant remnant.

The Spirit mainly comes upon prophets and national leaders in the OT. Joseph is described as having a 'divine spirit', and this explains his unique ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams (Gen. 41:38). The craftsman, Bezalel, who was called to work on the tabernacle was filled with the Spirit of God (Exod. 31:3; 35:31; cf. also 28:3; 1 Kgs 7:14). Here too the pattern holds: this unique filling of the Spirit enables Bezalel to do what no one else in Israel can.

Moses is unique as Israel's leader, and the Spirit is upon him (Num. 11:17). The seventy elders who are appointed to help Moses lead Israel receive the Spirit, but again, the Spirit marks them out from the rest of the people (Num. 11:25–26). When Moses exclaims his desire that Yahweh would put his Spirit upon all of the people just as he has done for the seventy (11:29), it seems clear that the rest of the people do not have the Spirit.

We need not rehearse each instance of the Spirit coming on a person in the OT to establish the point that in the OT those who have the Spirit are distinguished from the rest of the nation by their possession of the Spirit. Those on whom the Spirit comes serve either as leaders of the people or as prophets.²⁵

There is no direct evidence in the OT, then, that the believing remnant in the nation of Israel was individually, continually indwelt by the Spirit. Leon Wood, who argues that old covenant believers were indwelt, acknowledges this point. He writes:

The prior two chapters have investigated every instance where one or more OT persons are said to have experienced the Spirit either come on or leave them. The conclusion has been definite: every instance concerned an aspect of empowerment for a task, with no instances seeming to involve spiritual renewal.²⁶

²⁴ See 'The Semantic Range of *RUACH* in Hamilton, 'God with Men in the Torah', 131–33, where every occurrence of *ruach* (spirit) in the OT is catalogued.

²⁵ Cf. Caleb (Num. 14:24); Balaam (Num. 24:2); Joshua (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9); Othniel (Judg. 3:10); Gideon (Judg. 6:34); Jephthah (Judg. 11:29); Samson (Judg. 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14); Saul (1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 11:6; 19:23); Saul's men who prophesy (1 Sam. 19:20); David (1 Sam. 16:13); Amasai (1 Chr. 12:18); Azariah (2 Chr. 15:1); Jahaziel (2 Chr. 20:14); Zechariah (2 Chr. 24:20); the future Messiah (Is. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1); Isaiah (Is. 59:21); Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:2; 3:24; 11:5); Daniel (Dan. 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14); Micah (Mic. 3:8).

²⁶ Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, 64.

Wilf Hildebrandt, author of another study of the Spirit in the OT, arrives at a similar conclusion.²⁷

The eschatological outpouring of the Spirit

Just as Moses' exclamation of his wish that Yahweh would put his Spirit upon all the people assumes that all the people do not have the Spirit (Num. 11:29), so also the prophetic proclamations of an eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit indicate that the people do not have the Spirit when the proclamation is made. This is not the place for an examination of the relevant passages.²⁸ Here it suffices to note that these prophecies would hardly inspire hope if they merely promised what was already being experienced. These passages do not indicate that the old covenant remnant was indwelt by the Spirit, though they certainly point to a day when God's people will experience the Spirit in a new way.

Leon Wood states plainly that his view that old covenant believers were indwelt is not based on exegetical evidence but is a theological inference. He writes, 'Since [God] keeps the New Testament saint by indwelling ... it seems reasonable to believe that he kept the Old Testament saint in the same way'.²⁹

The question that this raises, of course, is whether or not John 7:39 forbids this inference.

The Spirit was not yet given

The text of John 7:39 reads, 'Now he said this concerning the Spirit, whom those who had believed in him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified'. For our purposes, the first thing to note is that this text indicates that those who have *believed* in Jesus are about to receive the Spirit. Since John 1:12-13 indicates that those who believe in Jesus have been born of God, this would seem to indicate that we should distinguish between new birth *by* and the reception of the Spirit. Those who have believed in Jesus are about to receive the Spirit, but this will not take place until after Jesus has been glorified. The gospel of John speaks of the reception of the Spirit in two other places (where the verb *lambanō* 'receive,' is used), 14:17 and 20:22. John 14:17 is instructive for determining what is meant by the statement that the Spirit will be received. In this passage Jesus says to his disciples:

And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Comforter, that he might be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world is not able to receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he is with you, and he will be in you (John 14:16-17).³⁰

²⁷ W. Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 61.

²⁸ The passages include: Is. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29 (cf. also Jer. 31:31-34, though the Spirit is not mentioned there). For discussion, see ch. 2 of my dissertation, 'He Is with You and He Will Be in You', 51-66.

²⁹ Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, 70.

³⁰ For a discussion of the text critical issues in John 14:17, see Appendix 2 of my dissertation, 'He Is with You and He Will Be in You', 213-20. It appears that the 'C' reading given to the future tense by the UBS committee results from cautious respect for Codex Vaticanus. The external and internal evidence for the future is otherwise overwhelming.

The Spirit will be in the disciples, whereas the world will not receive him. Since the indwelling of the disciples is parallel here to the reception of the Spirit, this would seem to indicate that the reception of the Spirit referred to elsewhere in John describes the commencement of indwelling. John 7:39 does not say that the Spirit was not yet active in the world, nor does it say that the Spirit was not yet making people alive (cf. John 6:63, 'The Spirit is the one who makes alive'). John 7:39 says that the Spirit was not yet received, and in view of John 14:17 this seems to mean that believers were not yet indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

John gives several indications that once Jesus began his ministry a salvation-historical shift began to take place. For instance, on two occasions John records that Jesus said, 'A time is coming and now is' (John 4:23; 5:25). These statements indicate that during the ministry of Jesus the *eschaton* was beginning to dawn. If as the *eschaton* dawns, those who have believed in the Messiah have not received the indwelling Spirit, and if they must wait until after Jesus is glorified at the cross to receive this, can it be legitimately maintained that those who lived prior to the inauguration of the eschatological age had already received the eschatological blessing of the indwelling Spirit?

Regeneration and indwelling in John

Thus far I have argued that there is no exegetical evidence in the OT that old covenant believers were indwelt, and that John 7:39 presents firm exegetical evidence from the NT that old covenant believers were not indwelt. If I am correct that old covenant believers were not indwelt, it is fair to pose the following question: how, then, did the old covenant remnant become and remain faithful to Yahweh? In this section I will argue that old covenant believers experienced new birth by the Spirit though they did not experience the indwelling of the Spirit.³¹ Here we will first consider what regeneration is in John, and then we will take up the question of what indwelling is in John.

Regeneration in John

In this discussion of regeneration in John we are mainly concerned with what these texts indicate regeneration does and does not entail. Here I will seek to show that in John regeneration is the creation of a new ability to perceive, understand, and believe. On the other hand, these texts do not indicate that the experience of new birth involves the Holy Spirit taking up residence in those who are made alive. In plain language, I am arguing that regeneration is not to be equated with indwelling.

We have already mentioned John 1:12–13. Verse 13 speaks of those who have been 'born of God'. This concept seems to be elaborated upon in John 3:1–12, but before we look to that passage we should observe that there is no indication in John 1:12–13 that to be 'born of God' is also to be indwelt by the Spirit.

In the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus recounted in John 3:1–12 ability is emphasised. The word *dunamai* (I am able) occurs five times in some form in John 3:2–5, and it appears again in 3:9. Jesus tells Nicodemus that new birth from above

³¹ Thus, in my view, it is wrong to equate regeneration with indwelling, as Dan Fuller (among others) does (*The Unity of the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 229–30).

results in the ability to see and enter the Kingdom of God (3:3, 5). When Nicodemus expresses amazement (3:9), Jesus responds with the words, 'If I have spoken earthly things to you and you have not believed, how will you believe if I speak heavenly things to you?' (3:12). The implication here in verse 12 is that Nicodemus is not able to believe.

This new ability is provided by the new birth from above by the Spirit (John 3:3, 5). In John 3:6 we read, 'What has been born of flesh is flesh, and what has been born of the Spirit is spirit'. To be 'born of the Spirit' (3:6) seems to be parallel with being 'born of God' (1:13). We should not take the words, 'what has been born of the Spirit *is spirit*' (3:6, emphasis added), to indicate that the one who experiences the second birth is indwelt by the Spirit, but rather that the one who is 'born of the Spirit' is now able to operate in the spiritual sphere.³²

John 6:63 also points to the Spirit's regenerating ministry. There John records Jesus saying, 'The Spirit is the one who makes alive; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life'. This text indicates that Jesus' words belong to the spiritual sphere, and that the flesh is of no use when trying to interpret and understand such a message. If one is to understand Jesus' words, which belong to the spiritual sphere and promise life, one must be made alive by the Spirit.³³

It seems, then, that these texts in John show that regeneration happens when the Spirit makes a person alive. When a person is made alive by the Spirit, it is as though a second birth has taken place, and the one who has experienced this new birth by the Spirit has a new ability to understand and believe. These texts do not indicate that when this happens the Spirit takes up residence in those who are thus enabled. In fact, John 7:39 speaks of those who have believed but not yet received the Spirit. Nothing in John or the rest of the NT stands in the way of the conclusion that the Spirit also enabled people to understand and believe under the old covenant. Therefore, in my view, the answer to the question, 'how did the old covenant remnant become faithful?' is, 'the Spirit regenerated them and thereby enabled them to believe'.

Indwelling in John

If indwelling is not equivalent to regeneration in the Gospel of John, what is it? In this section I will argue that indwelling is God's covenant presence. Paul is explicit that indwelling constitutes believers as God's temple: 'Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that God's Spirit dwells in you?' (1 Cor. 3:16). While John does not state this reality as explicitly as Paul, the fourth Gospel does indicate that the indwelling of the Spirit enables believers in Jesus to mediate blessings formerly mediated by the temple.

³² Cf. J.H. Bernard, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 106: 'Flesh and Spirit are distinct, and must not be confused ... They represent the two different orders of being, the lower and the higher ... Flesh can only beget flesh, while spirit can only beget spirit'. Similarly E. Schweizer, '*pneuma*', in *TDNT*, 6:438. For discussion of the 'sphere of the Spirit' in John, see my dissertation, 'He Is with You and He Will Be in You', 71-75.

³³ For further discussion of John 6:63 as it relates to this point, see my dissertation, 'He Is with You and He Will Be in You', 178-81.

It is something of a commonplace that Jesus replaces the temple in John.³⁴ Another commonplace is the notion that John indicates that the Spirit will continue the ministry of Jesus when Jesus goes away.³⁵ This is a good foundation for understanding the Spirit's ministry in John, but it stops short of recognising significant contours of the Spirit's ministry. What I have in mind here are the indications in John that the replacement of the temple by Jesus entails him becoming the new locus of God's presence and the place where sin is dealt with.³⁶ John then shows Jesus sending his disciples as he himself was sent (20:21), telling them that they will be the locus of God's presence when he departs (14:15–23), and granting them authority over the retention and forgiveness of sins (20:23). These considerations would seem to point towards John presenting the disciples not only as continuing of Jesus' ministry by the Spirit but also as replacing Jesus as the replacement of the temple. Thus, the Spirit in the disciples continues Jesus' ministry as the replacement of the temple.

It was noted above that under the old covenant God was to be sought and found at the temple. The Gospel of John shows Jesus declaring to the Samaritan woman that the time for worship at particular locations has come to an end: 'A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem' (John 4:21). Worship at the place of God's choosing, which was mandated by the OT (Deut. 12:5), is replaced by worship 'in spirit and in truth' (John 4:23). This new, unlocalised worship will take place in the sphere of spiritual reality.

Rather than dwelling in a particular temple in a particular city, Jesus proclaims to his disciples that he and the Father are going to make their dwelling with those who keep Jesus' words (John 14:23). In John 14:15–23 Jesus states that the Father, the Spirit and the Son will dwell in those who believe and obey.

This passage clearly shows us that indwelling is not to be equated with regeneration. Regeneration results in a new ability to see and believe. Indwelling is God's covenant presence. In verses 15–16 we read of Jesus saying, 'If you love me, you will obey my commands; and I will ask the Father, and he will give to you another Comforter.' If it is the indwelling of the Spirit that empowers obedience and love for Jesus, who can fulfil this condition that Jesus sets? But if those who have believed have been made alive by the Spirit and thereby are enabled, the demand that they love Jesus and keep his words in John 14:15 is within their reach. In my view, the Spirit has already regenerated them and given them the ability to obey. They are now responsible to fulfil necessary conditions so that God's dwelling place will be holy.

This corresponds to God's demand that Israel fulfil certain requirements to keep themselves holy so that he could dwell among them. We read in 1 Kings 6:11–13:

And the word of Yahweh came to Solomon saying, 'This house which you are about to build, if you will walk in my statutes and do my judgements and keep all my commandments to walk in them, then I will establish my word with you

³⁴ See the commentaries on John 2:21 and A.R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*, JSNTSup 220 (New York: Sheffield, 2002); P. Hoskins, 'Jesus as the Replacement of the Temple in the Gospel of John' (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002); B.D. Johnson, 'The Temple in the Gospel of John', in *Christ's Victorious Church*, ed. J.A. Weatherly (Eugene, OR: WIPF and Stock, 2001), 110–32.

³⁵ The classic expression of this is found in R.E. Brown, 'The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 13 (1967), 113–32; Brown, *John*, 1135–44. His followers are legion.

³⁶ Cf. John 1:14, 51; 2:13–21; 4:21–24; 10:30, 38; 19:30. For discussion of these texts, see my dissertation, 'He Is with You and He Will Be in You', 181–96.

which I spoke to David your Father, and I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel; and I will not forsake my people Israel'.

Jesus' words in John 14:23, 'If anyone loves me he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him', are strikingly reminiscent of God's word to Solomon regarding the necessary conditions under which God would dwell in the temple. Just as the people of Israel had to obey God's word to keep the place of God's dwelling holy, the disciples must love Jesus (John 14:15) and keep his word (14:23) to keep the place of God's dwelling holy. Whereas formerly the presence of God was mediated by the temple, in John 14:15–23 the mediation of the presence of God is promised to believers.

Another hint at what the indwelling of the Spirit means for believers is seen in John 20:22–23. Having breathed on the disciples and commanded them to receive the Spirit (20:22),³⁷ Jesus says, 'If you forgive the sins of any, they have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained' (20:23). Under the old covenant, people were required to go to the temple to offer sacrifice for sin and receive forgiveness. Now that sacrifice for sin has been completed by Jesus' death on the cross (cf. John 19:30) God can take up residence in a temple where no sacrifices are made, but where forgiveness can be found. This may shed light on Jesus' statement that the Spirit cannot be given to the disciples until Jesus goes to the cross (John 16:7) – believers cannot replace the temple as the place of God's dwelling until Jesus puts an end to sacrifice.

The indwelling of the Spirit in the Gospel of John seems to carry the ability to mediate blessings formerly found at the temple. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as well as by the Father and Jesus, the believing community mediates the presence of God and the forgiveness of sins, blessings formerly found at the temple. Thus it seems plausible that what we read in John concerning the indwelling of the Spirit serves as the historical foundation for the early church's understanding of itself as God's temple.³⁸

Conclusion: He is with you and he will be in you

Were old covenant believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit? No. They did not need to be. God dwelt in the temple. He was thereby with them. How did old covenant believers become and remain faithful? They became faithful by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, which in the OT is described more as 'circumcision of the heart' (cf. Jer. 9:25) than as 'new birth from above' (cf. John 3:3). They remained faithful not by the Spirit dwelling in them, but by the Spirit dwelling in the temple (Ps. 73:17), where they longed to be (Ps. 116:18–19). Further, the Spirit was active through Israel's prophets (1 Pet. 1:11). As the prophets proclaimed God's word, the Spirit instructed and admonished God's people (Neh. 9:20, 30). Under the old covenant, the Spirit gave life and was with the people as he dwelt in the temple. Under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life and dwells in God's people; they are his temple.³⁹

³⁷ For discussion of the interpretive options, and for an argument that Jesus' glorification is the crucifixion, which allows the Spirit to be given before the ascension, see my dissertation, 'He is with You and He Will Be in You', 111–19.

³⁸ For discussion of the early church in the temple in the New Testament, see R.J. McKelvey, *The New Testament: The Church in the New Testament*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

³⁹ Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

In Search of the Image of God: Theology of a lost paradigm?

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Is human nature a lost paradigm?¹ The rapid advance of science has exposed the fragility of a host of generally accepted ideas. At present, it seems easier to say what humanity isn't than to walk on the thin ice of bold definitions.² Did not M. Foucault suggest that the notion of 'man' itself is fluid? As a concept of modernity it is destined to disappear, swept away by the waves of time like a sandcastle on the beach.³

The subject requires a pinch of humility, for it is difficult to define precisely what constitutes the image of God in man. Older and more recent discussions, even the most rigorous attempts, seem to run aground on a multitude of qualifications.

In spite of the desire to have a clear vision of the image, a photographic image, it must be admitted we have nothing of the sort, even if the expression 'image of God' is often taken to be self-evident. H. Bavinck, for instance, felt able to affirm in his *Dogmatics* at the beginning of the last century that 'the essence of human nature is its being (created in) the image of God'.⁴ But can we go further and define what this essence is? Such is a hazardous venture!

Why do we experience such difficulty today concerning the image? Straightforward definitions, inherited from classical theologies and philosophies, seem to belong to periods of social stability characterised by clearly defined roles. Such is the case with the question of the male/female human duality in relation to the image of God, a question that was scarcely approached until recently. No demonstrations were necessary; the support of some biblical texts or tradition sufficed.

However, self-evident definitions of the image and humanity were eroded by the human tragedy of the 20th century.⁵ The theological result has been a transition from

1 As E. Morin suggests in his *Le paradigme perdu. La nature humaine*, Paris, Seuil, 1973.

2 Cf. P. Wells, 'Covenant, Humanity and Scripture', *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (1986:1), 17-45.

3 M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 398. Recently, however, J.-C. Guillebaud, with reference to Lacan, encourages his readers to resist the tyranny of biotechnology, arguing that the person transcends biological structures, *Le principe d'humanité*, (Paris: Seuil, 2001).

4 H. Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 159.

5 Novels by Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel and Milan Kundera are particularly popular and also the debated theses of F. Fukuyama on the future of man. Commentaries on the scientific problem in F. Lurçat, *L'autorité de la Science*, (Paris: Cerf, 1995) and *La Science suicidaire*, (Paris: F.-X. de Guibert, 1999).

a definition of man upheld by a certain amount of ontology, to more functional constructs. The influence of M. Buber, E. Brunner, K. Barth or K. Rahner has not been negligible in a shift to a new approach to the image.⁶ The end of the road has been reached with theories that deconstruct of the notion of humanity as such.⁷ Such pessimism is only too understandable after the most barbaric century in history. Oriental ideas have impacted the West through the influence of D.T. Suzuki and more recently the Dalai Lama. In this perspective, if there is nothing substantial to human nature as such, the individual is called to self-realisation.⁸

What then can be said, henceforth, about man, humanity and the image of God? If the predicament is obvious, perhaps we ought not to be greatly disconcerted. As J. Frame has indicated, nowhere does Scripture offer a *definition* of the image of God.⁹ This fact itself can foster salutary scepticism towards *sweeping* definitions, which were accepted in the past as evidence in theological systems where frontiers were clear-cut. Prudence can sometimes be a virtue.

The evolution of the notion of humanity raises vital and relevant questions: as Christians, do we have a vision of man as human that applies to our world? Islam most certainly has! But how does the Christian view of man distinguish itself from the Scylla of pervading relativism and scepticism and the Charybis of integrism?

Our discussion primarily concerns the fact that to speak about the image of God is to try and explain what constitutes humanity as such. A review of the following points is proposed:

- The image of God: some different approaches;
- The image of God: the historical heritage;
- Some propositions for theological construction;
- A theological perspective with some general pointers.

The image of God: some different approaches

From the first chapter, the Scriptures tell us that man is created in the *image of God*. It is possible that today we are really not able to comprehend fully just how amazing this affirmation is, placed in its historical and cultural context.

What does this expression mean? Evidently, it is a metaphorical usage, because man does not resemble a reproduction of God in miniature, like that of Caesar on Roman coins.¹⁰

⁶ For an overview of exegetical approaches see G. Bray, 'The Significance of God's Image in Man', *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.2, (1991), 194-225. Before Bray, D. Clines published a programmatic article on the subject, 'The Image of God in Man', *Tyndale Bulletin* 19, (1968), 53-103.

⁷ For example: W. Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), or G. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984). As with other deconstructionists, these authors reject the idea of 'common human nature/experience' but maintain that experience can give rise to a certain form of collective knowledge. Cf. T.M. Kelly, *Theology at the Void: The Retrieval of Experience*, (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2001).

⁸ Cf. M. Ricard and J.-F. Revel, *Le moine et le philosophe*, (Paris: Nil, 1997).

⁹ J. Frame, 'Men and Women in the Image of God' in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), 506 n1

¹⁰ H. Kühli, 'eikōn' in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, H. Balz and G. Schneider, eds, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), I, pp. 388ff, which includes a useful bibliography.

One conceivable interpretation is that man is the reflection of God or the substantial representation of his Being, of his essence. At first glance, this notion does not allow for an explanation of how the corporality of man can be associated with a resemblance to God. Another proposition is that the image is not a duplicate, a copy of God, but a correspondence of the divine reality in the created realm. So, for example, man, in his freedom, determines and transcends himself to resemble the image of the celestial archetype. Another possibility is that the image is a visible representation of an invisible reality. M.G. Kline has shown the place of cultic statues as representations of the power of the suzerain in ancient Middle East.¹¹ Thus, as the image of God, man is endowed with the function of representation in creation as prophet, priest and king. Here, the emphasis falls on the vocation with which man is invested.¹² In this respect Frame says: 'the image of God embraces everything that is human'.¹³

If a choice had to be made, the latter interpretation seems the most tempting as it fits in contextually with the cultural milieu of Genesis. It is precisely because man himself is the 'cultic statue' of God in creation, that making a graven image is forbidden in the Torah. This is coherent and shows in advance that the man who betrays his image becomes an idol himself.

The idea of the image relating to man's vocation departs, undoubtedly, from traditional interpretations that define the image as something in man, belonging to his essential nature. A brief survey of the historical development follows.

The image of God: the historical heritage

The following comments are limited to some of the ideas of the image in the historical tradition of Christianity.¹⁴

Eastern Orthodoxy

J. Barr has shown that according to the rules of Hebraic parallelism, and contrary to the distinctions within the theology of the Oriental Church, the words *tselem* and *demuth*, image and resemblance, are synonyms.¹⁵ But from the time of Irenaeus and through to Athanasius, the Greek Fathers tended to use this distinction to say that man, created in the image, must also attain to the likeness of the divinity. This was achieved in and by

¹¹ M.G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 26ff. Also 'Investiture with the Image of God', *Westminster Theological Journal* 40 (1977:1) 39-62. Concerning the image as representation see also G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: the Image of God*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 114ff.

¹² Cf. G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz Verlag, 1964), II, ch. XVI, ii; D.J. Hall, *Imaging God. Dominion as Stewardship*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

¹³ Frame, 'Men and Women in the Image of God', 231.

¹⁴ Short presentations are A.A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), ch. 4 and J. Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray, Vol. 2*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 41-46. For more detailed discussions see, J. Orr, *God's Image in Man and its Defacement*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948 (1905)), D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, (London: Collins (Fontana Library), 1973 (2)), and H.D. Macdonald, *The Christian View of Man*, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981).

¹⁵ J. Barr, 'The Image of God in the Book of Genesis - a Study of Terminology', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 51 (1968), 11-26. Cf. G. Bray, 'The Fall', *Evangel* 3 (1985:1), 13, who says that it is not possible to say that with the Fall man lost the likeness but kept the image.

the incarnate One.¹⁶ If the foundations of Orthodox anthropology are open to linguistic criticism, it does have the advantage of making the incarnation central and showing that an eschatology was introduced with the creation, a theme recurring in the covenant theology of Protestantism.¹⁷ Christ resembled God, in his life and in his death.

Roman Catholicism

The position of onto-theology became, through the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, the Roman Catholic position. Here the notion of image concerns the nature of man in creation, endowed with special gifts (*donum superadditum naturae*) that allow created man to accomplish his task.¹⁸ The image is supernatural. Man having become 'natural' after the Fall, lost supernatural qualities. With these gifts removed, man returns to a natural situation; the struggle of concupiscence, in which the flesh is opposed to the spirit.¹⁹ The sacraments restore the gifts of holiness in man through grace.

This position has the disadvantages of favouring an opposition between flesh and spirit, nature and grace, and of interpreting image and humanity in the light of the Aristotelian philosophy of Being. Maritain affirmed:

metaphysics rises above agnosticism and rationalism; ascending from experience to the uncreated Being, re-establishing in human being the proper hierarchy of speculative values and restoring in man the order of wisdom.²⁰

The advantage of this position on the other hand, is to make the notion of natural law central with regard to creation and to reveal the normative nature of law for creation.²¹

The Classical Reformation

The magisterial Reformation generally defined the image in man in the light of a notion of conformity to God.²² This conformity is neither natural nor supernatural, but ethical. The image is seen in what was lost and what is restored in Christ: justice, holiness and truth (Col 3:10, Eph. 4:24).

At creation, the fact that man is created in the image of God means that he is created with spiritual endowments, but in the eschatological situation of *posse*

¹⁶ Cf. V. Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, (New York: St Vladimir's Press 1989), chs 6 and 7 and J. Popovitch, *L'homme et le Dieu-Homme*, (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1989), *passim*.

¹⁷ G. Vos, 'The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology' in R.B. Gaffin ed., *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 234-70.

¹⁸ The expression comes from Alexander of Hales (†1245). Thomas calls these gifts 'gratia gratum faciens'.

¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, qq. 76, 90, 93, II-1, qq. 82, 83. For Thomas, the image remains after the Fall as the essence of humanity, including rationality: 'naturalia remanent integra'.

²⁰ J. Maritain, *Le Docteur angelique*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1930), 53. See also E. Gilson, *L'Être et l'essence*, (Paris: Vrin, 1972).

²¹ For this reason certain 'reconstructionists' in the theonomy movement can be well disposed to thomism.

²² H. Hepp, *Die Dogmatik der evangelische-reformierten Kirche*, (Neukirchener Verlag, 1958), 185-86.

peccare.²³ Therefore the image of God has three fundamental aspects: formal (the spiritual essence of the human soul), material (human faculties – the original holiness in justice, knowledge and love) and consequently, in a functional sense, the *dominium* of Adam. At the Fall, the image became corrupted almost to the point of obliteration – as J. Calvin went so far as to affirm²⁴ – in a total way, including man's vocation to serve God as his mediatorial representative in creation.²⁵ Calvin specifies: 'Even though we confess that God's image was not entirely annihilated and effaced in man, however it was so corrupted that whatever remains is a horrible deformity'.²⁶

Man remains, by nature, man in the image of God. This distinction may already be criticised as 'scholastic', for it is difficult in the case of man, a psychosomatic unity, to say where the formal aspect of the image ends and the material begins.

The advantage of this position lies in affirming that man remains in the image of God, with the dignity that that involves, in the sanctity of human life, for example, even after the Fall.²⁷ The downside is that the distinction between formal and material, nature and person is difficult to describe in terms of content. Its critics, such as G.C. Berkouwer, have had a field day exposing the weaknesses of the position without necessarily being able to come up with anything more coherent themselves.²⁸

A theological turning point

The 20th century presents new approaches to the question with the arrival of existentialism and phenomenology in philosophy and theology. They could be called, rather simplistically, 'functional' perspectives. In seeking to define the image of God they are less preoccupied with nature and more with the functions of humanity. Brunner, with his works *Natur und Gnade* (1934), *Der Mensch im Widerspruch* (1937) and his *Dogmatics* provides a link between what has gone before and what is to come. Barth further opened the breach and others followed. Four cases can be highlighted by way of illustration:

Brunner, in his *Dogmatics*, sought to maintain the classical distinction between the undefiled image and what remains of it.²⁹ In this respect his position is broadly Augustinian like that of the Reformers. However, he affirms that creation is supra-historical and that the Fall is an historical experience – which implies that there is no original justice or natural law for creation. The experience of each man begins with sin ... S. Kierkegaard's influence is evident in this formulation.

Barth introduced a different emphasis in his construction of the doctrine and, as elsewhere, shows the originality of his thought. His innovations subsequently become

²³ *Posse peccare*, literally, the possibility of sinning, which indicates man's capacity to fail.

²⁴ J. Calvin, *Commentaries on Genesis* 1:26, 3:1, Ephesians 4:24, 2 Corinthians 3:18. *Sermons on Job* 14:16-17, 32:4-5. Cf. T.F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 77-78.

²⁵ Heppel, *Die Dogmatik der evangelische-reformierten Kirche*.

²⁶ Calvin, *Institution chrétienne*, I.xv.4, cf., II.ii.17, (Aix-en-Provence: ed. Kerygma, 1978)

²⁷ R.W. Wilson, C.L. Blomberg, 'The Image of God in Humanity: a Biblical-Psychological Perspective', *Themelios* 18 (1993:3), 8-15 – man alone has a unique spiritual capacity with relation to God.

²⁸ Berkouwer, *Man: the Image of God*, 38-55, on the image in the broad and narrow senses, criticises Bavinck for 'mechanical' dualism, 53.

²⁹ E. Brunner, *Dogmatique*, II, (Genève, Labor et Fides, 1965), 67-74.

inescapable in the discussion.³⁰ A few inadequate brush strokes can hardly do justice to the complexity of Barth's propositions! The human sexual differentiation, contrary to the androgynous humanity of the Greeks, is rooted in the *imago Dei*.³¹ Genesis 1:27c is a commentary of 1:27a, b. The image of God is, from the outset, mutuality and reciprocity. God exists as a Being in relation, as the classical category of the *opera ad intra* portrays it; the same is true for man. God's primal decision is to make humanity dual because he himself is a plural God. Hence, there is an analogy (*analogia relationis*) between the trinitarian God and man, male and female. So human existence consists in the relation and the differentiation of man and woman. Barth maintains the reality of an analogy between God, in his trinitarian relationships, one and many, and created man. Therefore male and female together constitute the form of the image of God.³²

Barth's commentators unveil a debateable issue. According to the analogy of equal trinitarian Persons, there is also an order in the divine nature, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which recognises the primacy of the Father. If man is created in the image of God, this implies a relationship of equals in which primacy and functional subordination exist between man and woman. The analogy can be understood as follows:

- God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal in nature;
- God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are different in their functions,

which implies concerning the image of God in man:

- Man and woman are equal as to their created nature;
- and different in the order of their functions.³³

The consequence is a functional subordination of woman in relation to man, because in economical and personal terms, the Son is subordinate to the Father. Post-barthians, including theologians on the evangelical side, try to make some modifications. P.K. Jewett affirms that there is no hierarchy in Genesis 1 and 2 and that there are no superior and inferior roles in creation. The woman is not subordinate, but different.³⁴ Barth's proposition is open to the criticism of *bourgeoiserie* and of presenting a traditional view of male/female relations that reduces to monogamous marriage.

Even if Barth's proposition – that the image of God is the relationship between a man and woman in the image of the Trinity – has the credit of bringing into view the sexual relationship in debates on the image of God, it is not without unacceptable flaws, as subsequent feminist theologies claim. This proposition is too narrow and reduces the masculine and feminine roles to marriage, a man and a woman.

J. Moltmann profited from Barth's discussion, but redefined the image of God in man as the image of the *social* Trinity. Moltmann builds on Barth's viewpoint while at the

³⁰ In their discussion about natural theology, Brunner states that for Barth, the image in man is effaced, which Barth denied, although he seems to have redefined his position later. Cf. Berkouwer, *Man: the Image of God*, 51ff. and *General Revelation*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1955), ch. III.

³¹ Brunner comments briefly on sexual bipolarity in his *Dogmatique*, 77ff.

³² K. Barth, *Dogmatique*, (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1960), III/1, §41 2, 3.

³³ This formulation is close to classic calvinism, A. Bièler, *L'homme et la femme dans la morale calviniste*, (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1963), 36.

³⁴ P.K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 82–86, 112. See also his *Who we are: our Dignity as Human*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), ch. IV.

same time criticising 'monarchy' theologies with an absolute Subject.³⁵ The Trinity is a community. In their joint work *God, Man and Woman*, E. and J. Moltmann affirm that, contrary to the equivalence between monotheism and the sovereignty of God, it must be understood that, in the Trinity, God lives in social communion with himself. The doctrine of the Trinity becomes a model of communitarianism in Moltmann's subsequent books.³⁶ The Barthian model is taxed with patriarchy. Man is always above, the woman below. Jewett in his *Man as male and female*, reaches a similar conclusion. To really appreciate the image of God, one must go beyond the models that perpetuate the structure of subordination characterised by a functional superior and an inferior as advocated by Barth and Brunner.

If for Barth the image of God includes man and woman, and if for Moltmann, it is about real community, the contribution of C.E. Gunton seeks to broaden perspectives further. Gunton expresses a concern for speaking about the image of God in relation to redemption, but also in a creational and ecological context.³⁷ The way in which Gunton broadens Barth's functional model, so that it becomes a fully relational construct including creation, is stimulating. He uses the words *related*, *relatedness*, without hesitation. The image of God in man is in his 'relatedness' to everything that exists. A social and ecological relationship is in view above and beyond male-female communion. Gunton seeks to define humanity in relation to everything that exists, including the relationship with oneself and with the world. This enlargement of the notion of the image to the global relationships of man within whole of life contexts, including ecology, provides an attempt to respond to the real concerns of our contemporaries.

The strength of functional viewpoints resides in their desire to reformulate the notion of the image of God in a present day context. It is, however, important not to confuse the different points of view which have been presented. Their diversity is a reflection of theological pluralism and it is difficult to find a common denominator.

The weaknesses of Barth and of his particular functional approach, on an exegetical and theological level, have been pointed out by several authors, in particular:

Kline, in his *Images of the Spirit*, provides a critique of the Barthian position on Genesis 1:27. Kline says that the masculine/feminine reference cannot relate to the essence of the image of God for the following reasons:

- i) The sexual duality is not mentioned in the statement of divine intention in verse 26;
- ii) Phrases a) and b) of verse 27 provide a synonymous parallelism, which does not necessarily include 27c. 27c is not a supplementary parallel, but a further description that states *how* man is created in the image of God. The image extends to man and woman, as in Genesis 5:1ff;

³⁵ J. Moltmann, *Trinité et royaume de Dieu*, (Paris: Cerf, 1984), ch. 1. Another example of social anthropology at the time is W. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985). *Contra* the monarchical model feminist critics have been the most outspoken. Cf. S. McFague, *Models of God*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 59ff.

³⁶ E. and J. Moltmann, *Dieu, homme et femme*, (Paris: Cerf, 1984), ch. 6, which completes and corrects his preceding work *L'homme. Essai d'anthropologie chrétienne*, (Paris: Cerf-Mame, 1974). Cf. the discussion in *Dieu dans la création*, (Paris: Cerf, 1988), ch. ix.

³⁷ C.E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992).

- iii) According to Kline, 27c and Genesis 5:2a refer to the subsequent context of verses 28 and 5:2b, which present the divine blessing as the culmination of the divine intention in creation.³⁸

P.E. Hughes, in an original work, *The True Image*, adds two criticisms of a theological order concerning Barthian theology. In lapidary fashion he states that 'interpersonal relationship within the Godhead is in no sense a sexual relationship' Moreover, 'the interpersonal relationship in human society, while it is most intimately expressed in the sexual union of male and female, to which a special sanctity is attached, is not dependent on sexuality'.³⁹

These criticisms are not intended to infer that the views introduced by Barth, Moltmann or Gunton are not useful in the reformulation of the doctrine of the image of God today. On the contrary, they are thought provoking and it is important to know how to evaluate them. But if onto-theology, with its distinctions, deviated from the biblical message relating to the image of God, then 'social' doctrines in spite of their attractiveness, might be equally problematic regarding the content of the Scriptures, if the Scriptures do not actually speak in this way. This is open for discussion.

Some propositions for a theological construction of the *imago Dei*

Some statements can be formulated, in the light of preceding considerations, concerning elements that might contribute to a 21st century reconstruction of a doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

The question of individuality

However attractive the positions of Barth, Moltmann, Jewett and the 'social doctrines of the image' might be, it seems difficult to ignore the fact that the image concerns the human being in her individuality. As C. Seerveld has stated:

To be created means to be an individual reality, ordained in a cosmic fashion, with an irreducible difference, an entity which is identifiable and re-identifiable among other comparable entities ... This individualising structure is an ontic given of the creation.⁴⁰

This is an important affirmation, not simply on an anthropological plane, but also for christological reasons. It is man who is in the image of God as an individual, and each man and woman is in the image of God as an entity. According to Seerveld, this entity has a rooting in the life, breath and, body of man as well as in concrete realities in the functional sense. The person as a unity is a being with direction, *coram Deo*, the heart constituting the bearing of the individual.

³⁸ Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 33. Cf. Frame's comments, 'Men and Women in the Image of God', 228f.

³⁹ P.E. Hughes, *The True Image. The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989), 18, 19.

⁴⁰ C. Seerveld, 'A Christian Tin-can Theory of Man', *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, June 1981, 75. Cf. H. Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, (Nutley, NJ.: Craig Press, 1960), ch. VIII, on which Seerveld draws.

Nature and person

The creation establishes man as a being with multiple functions, a human nature, but also as a person. Recently Hughes, A.A. Hoekema and G. Bray have distinguished between man's nature as a creature and man as a person. Frame also makes a distinction between the image as resemblance and the image as representation.⁴¹ The resemblance of the image concerns human nature and its structure, and includes: the human being as such, moral excellence, ethical capacity, and the body with its sexual differentiation. Concerning representation however, in the area of the function of man in God's image, a human being has a triple action in creation as prophet, priest and king.⁴²

Such distinctions provide a differentiation between man's nature and his destiny. Man is still man after the Fall, but his destiny had a change of course which is alien to his nature in creation. Bray distinguishes between the human nature, *humanitas*, which survived, in spite of sin, and man's person that suffers corruption and death.⁴³

In other words, through sin as tragic destiny, the personal functions in the domain 'I-thou-world' are affected by man's alienation with regard to God and the neighbour. Man has not lost humanity, but integrity. This situation is often illustrated by the fact that after the Fall, humans did not become animals, even if man often proves himself to be 'a wolf for man'. Calvin, for example, does not hesitate to write: 'the likeness of God extends to the whole excellence by which man's nature towers over all kinds of living creatures'.⁴⁴

The true Image of God

The image of God, as has already been stated, is to be interpreted as metaphorical and not a literal reality. Thus, we come to the interesting suggestion made by Hughes in his book on Christ and the image of God. For Hughes, the true and only image, correctly speaking, is Jesus-Christ himself. It is because the Son is the eternal Word that he is the true image of the divinity.⁴⁵

This christological affirmation seeks conformity with the NT data, where, as H. Ridderbos affirms, the resurrected One is revealed as the eternal Son of God, as the One who alone is the true image-bearer of the divinity.⁴⁶ Hughes raises the question as to whether it is possible to affirm, with Bavinck or Berkouwer, that man is the image of God, since man and image are not identical. Man is only, in creation and in the renewal of creation, *in the image of the Image*. The true image is the eternal Logos, the true revelation, the God-Man incarnate. Man is in the image of God in an indirect way with Christ interposed. Only the Incarnate Son presents himself as the true image and

41 Hughes, *The True Image*, 5; Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 7; Frame, 'Men and Women in the Image of God'

42 With, according to Frame, the correlates of control, authority and presence. 'Men and Women in the Image of God', 230f.

43 Bray, 'The Fall', 14, 'if we picture sin as part of human nature, then either Christ sinned or he did not have a human nature – an impossible dilemma!' Cf. his article, 'The Significance of God's Image in Man', where he refers approvingly to Hughes: 'when man sinned, his relationship with God was altered from one of obedience to one of disobedience, but there is no ontological change in man himself', 224.

44 Calvin, I.xv.3.

45 Hughes, *The True Image*, ch. 1, 2.

46 H. Ridderbos, *Paul. An Outline of his Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1975), 69–78.

likeness of the divinity.⁴⁷

The significance of this suggestion is its christocentric focus and conformity to NT language; it also lies in the fact that it avoids getting involved in a plethora of scholastic disputes on the content of the image, its remainder and its ontological nature. This enables Hughes to talk about the aspects of the image: man's spirituality, morality, rationality, authority and creativity as image of the Image, which are only complete in Christ as a personal hypostasis.

Desexualising the image?

Is it not without justification, in the light of what has been previously stated, to attempt to desexualise the notion of the image of God, even though it is impossible to avoid the inevitable question of sexual differentiation? Where should sexuality be placed in relation to the image? Frame suggests the sexual differentiation exists on the level of man's nature as image and likeness of God. In response to the question 'Is sexual differentiation an aspect of the image of God?' he affirms:

Yes, for everything we are images God. The point is not that God is male, female, or both. To say that our eyes image God is not to say that God has eyes; it is rather to say that our eyes picture something divine. Similarly, our sexuality pictures God's attributes and capacities.⁴⁸

The question arises, however, as to whether sexual duality should not be considered as the presence of the image in its vocational, functional and personal aspects, rather than in that of the (ontological) nature of man. Individualisation in human beings makes them men or women, masculine or feminine people.

In this respect the critique of the Barthian position must be reconsidered. The relationship between a man and a woman in the image of the Trinity implies some form of order, even if, in this same image, there is equality in nature. The image inevitably slides, in the mind of Brunner and Barth, to the husband/wife relationship. Jewett, on the other hand, affirms that the NT texts which refer to subordination concern the second account of creation rather than Genesis 1. He states however, that in its context, Genesis 2 is not speaking about the inferiority of woman, but about her relationship to man. The issue is not the subordination of woman, but her 'being-with' man. Is it not desirable to limit the damage done by the cultural context of patriarchy? Paul drew the right conclusions and went beyond it in Galatians 3:28 with its egalitarian overtones. In a different situation, that of today, it is possible to discern with greater freedom what is really implied in Genesis 2 and Galatians 3: full equality between men and women as the image of God. It is only in true partnership that humanity, man and woman, is really complete.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ This formulation is not far from Barth's notion of Word of God; this minefield must be negotiated with caution!

⁴⁸ Frame, 'Men and Women in the Image of God', 229, who indicates among these attributes: creativeness, love, dominion and divine condescension. See also W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), ch. 22 and P. Wells, 'God and Gender', *Christianity and Society*, 10 (2000:2), 22-26.

⁴⁹ Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 171. Cf. F. de Coninck, 'A propos du ministère féminin', *Hokhma* 44 (1990), 45-58.

Coming back to the text, Genesis 1:27, 28 seems to speak primarily in generic fashion. It deals with *Mensch, Man*, humanity, including the fundamental differentiation between man and woman.⁵⁰ As W.J. Dumbrell states:

The notion of the image of God in Genesis 1 is primarily to be understood in terms of function as referring to the whole man. By creation man is the visible representation in the created world of the invisible God.⁵¹

Genesis 2, on the other hand, supplies further precision not about nature or structure, but about function and task. The notion of different functions, which do not in principle exclude hierarchy, is not contrary to the notion of the image of God, nor that of a diversity in creation. After all, in the NT, the notions of parent-child/man-woman/master-servant imply a structured diversity among those who, at creation, are all made in the image of God.

1 Corinthians 11:7 raises a related problem concerning sexual bipolarity and the image, which is difficult to avoid: man is said to be the image and glory (*eikōn kai doxa*) of God; but the woman is the glory (*doxa*) of man. How difficult it is to unpack this text! Some interpreters seem to believe that aspects of local culture are raised to the level of normativity and that the apostle defends his view with an incorrect rabbinical exegesis. . . Genesis itself would not allow the apostle to argue as he does. Does Paul, however, refer to Genesis 1:26–28 in this passage? In what respect?

J. Hurley has given one plausible account of this complicated passage in his *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*. He affirms that Genesis 1 is not about hierarchy within the species but about the dominion of God as creator and the fact that the human image has dominion with regard to the other species. Suggestions of *intra-human* equality or subordination do not figure in this text. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul does not discuss the question of the nature of human dignity as such, but refers to questions of order. Hence, Genesis 1:26ff. is not a proof-text to support male primacy; the theme of the first chapter of Genesis serves to establish the notion of divine dominion in creation, exercised by God and through man.⁵² Moreover, the apostle replaces the word *homoïōsis* in the Greek text of Genesis (LXX, Gen. 1:26) with *doxa*, and so he does not use exactly the same expressions as in Genesis.⁵³ He does show, however, that man reflects the image of God because of his role as 'head'. Glory is a relational concept and to speak of the glory of such and such a thing indicates a relationship to its source, and to the honour that one person brings to another.⁵⁴ Man is the glory of God in relation to him. The woman on the other hand, is the glory of man in his relationship to her. As the image of God, comments Bray, a woman reflects the

⁵⁰ J. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 171ff, written before the major debates on this question got under way. Cf. H. Blocher, *Révélation des origines*, (Lausanne: P.B.U., 1979), 91, 99 and S.T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 51ff, 100ff.

⁵¹ W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, (Exeter: Paternoster, 1994), 34.

⁵² Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 172.

⁵³ Bray argues, contrary to exegetical assumptions, that *eikōn* and *doxa* are not synonymous, but remain 'stubbornly different', 'The Significance of God's Image in Man', 219f. Cf. C.K. Barrett who says that in this context Paul only values the term image as leading to glory, *A Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 252.

⁵⁴ Frame, 'Men and Women in the Image of God', 228.

glory of the male, not the glory of God directly, adding that 'within creation *doxa* bears witness to order and hierarchy, but not to inequality or enforced submission'. Hurley infers that 'the woman is not called to image God or Christ in the relation which she sustains to her husband. She images instead the response of the church to God and Christ by willing, loving self-subjection.'⁵⁵

In Ephesians 5 (vv. 22–23) and 6, this diversity is placed in a christological context and can also exist, for example, in the different areas of ministry in the church. We should think long and hard before affirming that the apostle exegetes Genesis incorrectly. Here, as elsewhere, Paul is not speaking about the nature of man and woman, but about their functions and stations.

Of course, this does not constitute a proposition that might elucidate in what precise respect the primacy of man as 'head' is exercised in relation to woman.⁵⁶ Recent works that try to elucidate this relational mystery often leave us unsatisfied. For example, the collection edited by the French Catholic scholar X. Lacroix,⁵⁷ *Homme et femme. L'insaisissable différence*, has an appropriate title. In spite of the many approaches presented in this collection of articles, the nature of the male-female relationship remains mysterious. Lacroix quotes L. Beirnaert: 'The difference between the sexes means that any anthropology which seeks to close the circle in a definition fails.' He adds that when an attempt to divide values and virtues between masculine and feminine is made, it ends up by 'eliminating the particularity of masculine and feminine qualities'.⁵⁸ The more specification is attempted, the more the values are seen as being not male or female, but simply human. Therefore:

As a mystery the difference (of male/female) is not just limiting of rationality, it is also the locus of revelation. It bears the mark of transcendence beyond knowledge, and is the sign of otherness, the difference of the other first of all, the 'thou' perceived in hidden depth, which always escapes our knowledge. In a religious perspective, alterity becomes itself a revelation of a more radical difference, that of the absolute Third, *Ille*, of whom the trace is found in every relation worthy of the name.⁵⁹

Lacroix concludes with a little ludic diversion:

The first thing said of Adam is dual: male and female. And the Talmud states: 'Man without woman diminishes the image of God in the world'. The two letters in Hebrew that distinguish *iyeh* from *ichah*, *yod* and *he*, together make the beginning of the divine name, *yh*. It is as though the opposite sex were for each person the revelation of the hidden face of the divine.

Described in such terms the mystery is truly unfathomable!

⁵⁵ Bray, 'The Significance of God's Image in Man', 221 and Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 173, (italics Hurley's).

⁵⁶ I have not had access to the work by the Catholic theologienne M.T.P. Santiso, *La femme espace de salut*, (Paris: Cerf, 1999).

⁵⁷ X. Lacroix, ed. *Homme et femme. L'insaisissable différence*, (Paris: Cerf, 1999). Lacroix' formulations give the impression that nature is completed by grace and that where the rational ends, non-rational mystery begins.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 145, 147.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 145, 147, referring to E. Lévinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (1972).

Precisely for this reason, it does not seem superfluous to 'desexualise' the debate on the image of God, as Hughes has suggested:

Contrary to Karl Barth, we conclude that male and female duality does not provide the key to the understanding of the divine image in which man was formed. Man's person-to-Person relationship with his Maker, itself undoubtedly an indicator of that 'image', is not determined by the fact of human sexuality. It exists independently of sexuality. Of this the perfect paradigm is the unclouded interpersonal harmony that informed the relationship between the incarnate Son and the heavenly Father, for in his incarnation the Son, who is himself the Image of God, expressed the fullness of life in that image, that is to say, as our fellow man, in a manner that was not in any way dictated by the issue of sexual duality.⁶⁰

Dynamic functionalism

Kline and Gunton have revived the debate on the image of God by detaching themselves from former problematic categories, from fixation on the problem of sexual duality, and by introducing new exegetical or theological perspectives. Kline considers the image of God as man's appointment to rule over the earth, under the leading of God's Spirit. God reveals himself in creation by the Spirit as the Alpha and Omega: 'God created man in the likeness of the Glory to be a spirit-temple of God in the Spirit'.⁶¹ Kline speaks of a 'primal *parousia*' and a prophetic model of the image of God: 'The Glory theophany, in which God was present as Logos-Wisdom and Spirit-Power, stood as archetype at the creation of man as God's image'.⁶² The language is at times difficult to fathom and may be considered as a stimulating form of *midrash* striving for clearer understanding. The important point is that Kline considers the image of God as the expression of the appointment of man, his anointing as prophet, priest and king in creation. This functional notion of the image invites further development.

Gunton encourages reflection in his lectures on *Christ and Creation* by proposing a dynamic model of the image in man stimulated by an ethic of sacrifice. Using Romans 12:1-2, he proposes that Christian service focuses on sacrifice and that the image of Christ is thereby realised. Man's relationship with God, through Christ, is restored by an ethic that involves what we do with our persons and what we do in and with the world as creation. It is 'offering to God that creation which he has placed in our hands ... a vision of what it is to be in the image of God and a consideration of how we should seek to embody it in our communities of worship and life'⁶³

⁶⁰ Hughes, *The True Image*, 20.

⁶¹ Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 21.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶³ Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, 117, 119.

The dynamic nature of man should be a prime consideration in reformulating the definition of the image of God. The image can be considered as:

- personal: man is a personal individual before God and others;
- non-dualistic: man is characterised by unity of being which is not divided into 'flesh and spirit';
- christocentric: Christ, through his incarnation, is the only true image of God;
- dynamic: man is called, ethically, to fulfil his destiny as a creature according to his Christ-likeness: towards God, himself, his neighbour and the creation.

A theological perspective on the themes of Creation, Fall and Redemption

If we leave to one side the prodigious work of Moltmann⁶⁴ in his books on the Trinity, the kingdom of God and the creation, the recent thinker who incites the most reflection on the image of God is undoubtedly Gunton, who has the credit of taking on the challenge of considering the complementarity of creation, christology and redemption.

Gunton gives the impression that he finds Barth's doctrine of the image rather restricted as a portrayal of the wholeness of human relationships. The Trinity is an expression of 'relatedness in otherness' in God and in man. Being in the image of God implies personal and non-personal dynamics that characterise humanity as a whole. 'Relation constitutes who and what we are.'⁶⁵ Relationships are both vertical and horizontal: 'relatedness takes shape in a double orientation'.⁶⁶ Gunton's definition of the image is as follows: 'To be in the image of God is to be called to represent God to the creation and the creation to God, so enabling it to reach its perfection.'⁶⁷ W. Pannenberg has also summed up this insight concisely:

Because God wills fellowship with us, namely our participation in the fellowship of the Son with the Father by the Spirit in the life of the Trinity, and therefore also our fellowship with one another, he wills too that we should recognise each other, in our distinctiveness, in order that we may all find in others a supplementing of our own lives and our own selves as members in a living fellowship.⁶⁸

After the Fall, restoration is only made possible through Christ and the 'reordering' accomplished in his person. Distortion of the image affects the relationship between a person and God, between people and between persons and the world. The image restored through Christ's sacrifice is freedom from deformed relationships. Thus man becomes capable once again of mirroring the image of God in relation to the Creator,

⁶⁴ R. Bauckham, *God Crucified. Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1988). Cf. H. Goudineau and J.-L. Souletie, *Jürgen Moltmann*, (Paris: Cerf, 2002). In a new edition of his *Christologie*, (Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 2002), H. Blocher presents a concise and important discussion of Moltmann's thought.

⁶⁵ C.E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 206.

⁶⁶ C.E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 116.

⁶⁷ C.E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, 102f, (italics Gunton's). See also. C. Schwöbel and C.E. Gunton, eds., *Persons, Divine and Human*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991).

⁶⁸ W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, III, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998), 582f.

to others and to the world. In the biblical message there is a whole dynamic of restoration centred on Christ and driven by him with respect to God, to ourselves, to others and the world. The reestablishment of the image is global, even if incomplete, in this world before the coming of Christ.

We are surely indebted to Gunton for having suggested a view of the image in the perspective of Christian eschatology in which a christological focus and an ecological application come into play.

So what of the relationship between Adam and Christ, between creation, christology and redemption? A perennial question raises its ugly head: Is Christ in the image of Adam, or is Adam in the image of Christ? Andreas Osiander, a Lutheran theologian, published two speculative treatises in 1550, entitled: 'Whether the Son of God would have had to be incarnated, if sin had not entered the world' and 'What the image of God is'. Calvin was not impressed and rejected the debate on these terms as being 'trivial'. It is not a helpful question; he refuses to enter into the logic that Christ would have become incarnate even had Adam not sinned.⁶⁹

Is Adam in the image of Christ or is Christ in the image of Adam? In the Scriptures, the question of the relationship between anthropology, christology and redemption receives no formal or precise theological response. Their relationship is a limited theological model developed, on the basis of 'good and necessary consequence', into a comprehensive synthesis using elements of a biblico-theological nature.

Even in the NT, the data do not present an overview of the composite human being, *humanity*, considered to be the image of God. Rather we find a presentation that deals essentially with Adam and Christ, the two heads of humanity.⁷⁰ The recently renewed interest for post-Reformation covenant theology might permit the cobwebs to be brushed off certain useful theological categories. According to covenant theology, a covenant of works, creation or life exists between God and humanity,⁷¹ which provides the conditions for renewing the covenant of grace. The notion of federal headship enables conceiving the restoration of the image of God in the context of the historical covenants. These dealings of God with man find their substantial unity in the eternal plan of God, the 'covenant of redemption', in which Christ figures as the true image of God and mediator between God and man. It is precisely because of this supra-historical plan that human beings are man-images of God in space-time, Christ having accepted to be the Mediator of redemption. He is thus the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.⁷²

The Son's acceptance, from all eternity, to become incarnate as historical Mediator and Saviour, is the way in which our humanity as creatures is validated. As a *Memorial* prayer beautifully states, Christ 'didst most wonderfully and humbly choose to be made man, as never to be unmade more, and to take our nature, as never more to lay it off'. Human beings in the image of God, have a destiny intimately associated with the

⁶⁹ A. Osiander (1498–1565) also wrote an anonymous preface to the first edition of Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus Orbium Caelestium*. Cf. Calvin, *Institution chrétienne*, I.xv.3. W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, (London: Lutterworth, 1956), 126, 133ff.

⁷⁰ Cf. Bray *The Significance of God's Image in Man*, 209ss. On federal theology and sin see H. Blocher, *Original Sin. Illuminating the Riddle*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press (Apollos), 1997).

⁷¹ Cf. L.D. Bierma, 'Law and Grace in Ursinus' Doctrine of the Natural Covenant' in C.R. Trueman and R.S. Clark, eds., *Protestant Scholasticism*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 96–110, Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, ch. 5.

⁷² Cf. Ap 13.8, He 4.3, 9.26, etc.

second Adam. Men in the generic sense, fallen in Adam are renewed in Christ, because he who is 'the image of the invisible God' bound himself to become man to save us, according to the eternal plan of God (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4). These texts make 'no difference between the image and the essence of the invisible God. In Christ we see God. By participating in Christ, man regains the image of God that was intended to be.'⁷³

Apart from isolated texts in the NT, such as James 3:9, which speak in a general way about man as an image of God, the image and its restoration are invariably associated with Christ and the new community he introduces.⁷⁴ All is resumed in the *en Christo*. Christology and the work of redemption do not introduce a new human structure, nor create another image *ex nihilo*. The redemption in Christ, by his incarnate humanity, is only the renewal of that which exists in creation, with the eschatological promise of a new humanity in a new creation.

There are therefore two heads of humanity, Adam and Christ. In Adam, we are destined for perdition; in Christ, through his appointment as prophet, priest and king, as representative of the true image of God, creation finds its renewal in his body, of which the believer becomes a member. As man, Jesus Christ is the true image, the perfect resemblance of God, in his active and passive obedience (Ps. 8:5-6; Heb. 2:5-9). Thus everything, past, present and future is recapitulated in Christ.

A provisional conclusion

The human image of God exists within a relationship: either in Adam or in Christ, and within them, there is relationship with God, one's neighbour, and other creatures. In the NT, the image refers essentially to the new community in Christ. Therein exist men and women recreated by the Spirit in the image of the Image, in an eschatological dynamic of progress and of hope. The dynamic structures of creation thus participate in the renewal of the former things without obliterating them. As O. O'Donovan states:

The triumph of the Son of man prepares the way for the future triumph of his 'brethren', mankind as a whole. But this eschatological triumph of mankind is not an innovative order that has nothing to do with the primal ordering of man as creature to his Creator. It fulfils and vindicates the primal order in a way that was always implied, but which could not be realised in the fallen state of man and the universe.⁷⁵

⁷³ O. Flender, 'Eikōn' in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, II, C. Brown ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 288; Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 34-41.

⁷⁴ Cf., F.W. Eltester, *Eikōn im Neuen Testament*, Berlin, Töpelmann, 1958, passim.

⁷⁵ O. O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*.

Most Moved Mediator

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The current movement called, generally, 'open theism' seems to undermine or subvert the very Christianity that it wants to maintain. This is for at least two reasons.

In the first place, any view that minimises or reduces God's 'God-ness', including his absolute sovereignty over his creation, appeals directly, though subtly, to our sinful hearts. We, in our sins, long to be autonomous. We long to have God at our beck and call, and then to offer him our worship once he is domesticated. Surely one of the primary lessons of church history is that to attribute absolute sovereignty to God is a most difficult mental and spiritual exercise. The view that God has given up his sovereignty for our sakes has, regrettably, been predominant in Christian history, and, conversely, holding fast to the teaching of God's absolute sovereignty has been an unpopular and taxing effort in the church.

In the second place, behind a mask of concern for biblical truth, a supposed rejection of Hellenistic ideas, and an attempt to emphasise God's relationality, lies either an ignorance or (perhaps worse) a rejection of the hard-fought richness of the controlling motifs of Scripture (and thus of theology), motifs that have demonstrated the beauty of orthodoxy while at the same time motivating the saints through the ages to worship and praise him for who he is: The god of open theism is not to be praised, but pitied; he is a pathetic excuse for a god, one that would fit well within the ancient Greek pantheon.

It is this second reason that will be pursued here. The first is equally important. There is an abundance of literature, however, going back at least to Augustine's battle with Pelagius, that deals head-on with those who would want to assert their autonomy from God. In the second concern, there are subtleties, nuances and sub-texts that need to be displayed in order to see the openness view as the mess of pottage that it is.

It is beyond controversy among orthodox Christians and theologians that the motif of Scripture centres around the person and work of Christ. Christ himself rebuked the Pharisees for searching the Scriptures and not finding him there (John 5:39f.). The Scriptures of which he spoke were, of course, the OT. Though the details of God's climactic revelation in his Son were learned progressively in redemptive history, those who looked to God's special revelation were required, within the confines of the revelation present to them, to see God's Messiah there.

One prominent example of this messianic or christological motif in the OT is found in that momentous passage in Exodus 3, a passage that was meant to form the context for all of God's dealings with Israel under the Old Covenant.

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the LORD said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?' He said, 'But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.' Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.''' God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations (Exodus 3:1–15).¹

There are a number of truths given to us in this text, some which we cannot elaborate here. At least three truths, however, that are evident in this passage, help us to see more clearly the superficiality of the minimised god of open theism.

First, how God initially identifies himself to Moses:

And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'

The first way in which the LORD describes himself, is as Moses' God, the God of Moses' father, Abraham. This is typical throughout the OT when God wants his people to know that he is *their* God (note Exod. 6:7, for example, as well as Jer. 7:23, 11:4, etc.). He identifies himself as the covenant God. Notice, just prior to this passage in Exodus 3, we read in Exodus 2:24–25:

¹ All translations are from the English Standard Version.

And God heard their groaning, and *God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*. God saw the people of Israel – and God knew.

The mention of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is meant to remind us of God's relationship to his people, a people of his own choosing (John 15:16), and a people for God's own possession (1 Pet. 2:9). Exodus 3 opens with the reminder that God is a covenant God, and that he knew the sufferings of his people in Egypt.

When God appears to Moses in the burning bush, he announces himself as the God of the covenant, more specifically, as Moses' God, and thus as the God of Israel.

The passage is, therefore, replete with covenant language. Notice, Exodus 3:7, 9:

Then the LORD said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings ... And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

The openness movement would have us believe that the finite god of Israel just happened to glance at his people in Egypt and then, because what he happened to notice moved him to act, he determined to do something about it.

What God is actually saying to Moses, however, is an elaboration of his initial announcement to him. He is telling Moses just what it means that he is a covenant God. There is an intensity about the language that communicates clearly that God is identifying himself with the suffering of his people. That intensity is communicated, in the first place, when God says that he has 'surely seen' the suffering of his people.² In the second place, we are told twice (once in 2:25 and again in 3:7) that God knows the suffering of his people. In the context of God's covenant faithfulness to his people it would be impossible to understand God's 'knowing' in these passages as something intellectual or strictly mental, as if God learned something at a given point in the history of his people. The 'knowing' here is covenantal knowing. It is the kind of knowing, for example, that we see in Genesis 4:1, where Adam 'knew' Eve and she conceived. It is a knowing of identity, a knowing of intimacy, a knowing that highlights the union of the ones known to the Knower (see Isaiah 63:9ff.).

God comes to Moses, then, and announces two things. First, he announces his covenant status; he announces that he is a covenant God and as the covenant God he has identified himself with the suffering of his people. Second, Moses has been chosen as God's instrument to deliver the Lord's people from their bondage.

The second thing to note in this text is that, as Moses is called to the task of deliverer, he claims to need more information. He may have realised the commitment of God to do what he said he would do, but he also realises that, if he is to be God's instrument, he would need to know as much as possible about the authority of the One who is sending him. So, he asks for God's name. He wants to know what God is like; he wants to know exactly who it is that is sending him into Egypt. And God says to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'

² The intensity of the language is clearer in the original Hebrew. For example, in v. 7, God says, translated literally, 'Seeing, I have seen...', an idiom that communicates resolve and intensity on the part of the one 'seeing'.

This revelation of God's name has prompted significant discussion among commentators. Without reproducing the controversies surrounding this text, we should highlight a few points that are crucial for understanding what God is revealing here.

The medieval view of this text was that God is revealing himself here as the self-existent One. This is criticised by many contemporary OT scholars on the grounds that issues like the aseity of God would not cross the mind of an ancient Israelite. This, however, certainly cannot be the case, given the history of God's dealings with his people. This interpretation speaks more about the influence of Immanuel Kant on current hermeneutics, than about the text itself.

We should note, however, that, without question, in this text God is declaring his self-existence. Though he initially announces himself as the God who is with his people, and thus in history, when he is asked to give his name, he announces himself as the God who is also above history; he alone is the 'I am.'

One of the reasons that some commentators are confused about what God is saying here is due to their fascination with the etymology of the phrase, to the neglect of its revelational context. It is virtually impossible to discover simply by analysis of terms the significance of this divine name. Rather, the significance of the divine name is to be seen, not from etymological considerations, but particularly from revelational considerations. In part, what God is saying here is, 'If you want to know who I am, watch and see my inner character from my mighty acts. I am who I am, in and of myself, and who I am to and for you.' This is the presupposition of all Christian theology – that God is in himself, what he is to us and for us.

Rather than isolating the pronouncing of the divine name from the context in which it is revealed, we can only properly understand it within that very context. Yahweh does indeed reveal his divine independence. In the context of the Exodus narrative he proves himself to be unlimited, not constrained by temporal categories. More generally, he announces himself as one who is independent of the created order and therefore sovereign over it. 'I AM WHO I AM' indicates that, by contrast, for example, with Moses, who is what he was and will become what he is, who had a beginning and an end in human history, God possesses his existence without beginning, without end, without explanation beyond himself. The ultimate fact of divine revelation is that God is who he is, without cause, without beginning or end. Of God alone can it be said, 'He is who he is'.

This is precisely what was modelled for Moses in the event of divine revelation that was given with the word-revelation. This 'show and tell' method of God's revelation seems, too, to have been under-emphasised all too often. God often tells us who he is by giving us an earthly picture, or analogy, of who he is.³ It is not an insignificant detail that what draws Moses into God's presence is a picture of who God is. There is no analogy in the creation for the independent and the uncreated. As a result God creates a picture of his character in the burning bush. The fire does not derive its burning from the context in which it burns. It is self-generated, contradicting all rules of creation. The bush is on fire, but the fire is not dependent on the bush; it possesses its own energy. There is, it seems, a deliberate and revelational sign given by God to unveil the significance, both of God's covenantal revelation to Moses, as well as his revelation of the divine name – 'I AM WHO I AM.'

³ This is understood more clearly in the NT. For example, we understand something of what it means that Christ is the true Bread as we see him miraculously feed five thousand. This 'show and tell' method of revelation should be seen more explicitly throughout Scripture

We should see then that the *unburning bush* shows on the one hand, the absolute independence of God, that he possesses being in and of himself in a manner that is without precedence in all of creation. It points to an ontological truth. The ultimate fact about God that makes the human mind stagger and reel, because we have no categories to describe or understand this element of the existence of God, is that he simply is. But it also shows, on the other hand, that, while remaining the 'I Am,' while remaining a *se*, while remaining God, God is nevertheless with his people, just as the fire was with the bush. The significance of the bush that did not burn, was that, in any other circumstance, the fire would need the bush in order to be fire. Not only so, but once used as fuel, the bush itself would be consumed by the fire. In what Moses saw, however, neither did the fire need the bush, nor was the bush consumed. The 'I Am' has covenanted with his people, therefore as he abides with them they are not destroyed.

Here, then, is the beauty of God's character, a character that is nonexistent in openness theology. It is the wonderful mystery of the God who is a *se*, eternally and immutably dependent on nothing but himself, covenanting with us, relating to us, in such a way that we can know and love him.

Thirdly, once we understand this, once we see the supreme significance of God's announcement of his name in the context of his covenant, the most important words to understand in this passage are the four in verse 8, 'I have come down'.⁴ These four words could easily serve to frame the core of our understanding of God from Genesis to Revelation. There is no way to understand both who God is and his dealings with his creation without seeing this principle running throughout Scripture. It is the 'Yarad' (dry) principle; it is the Emmanuel (God with us) principle. It is the principle of the covenant.

This principle is nothing new in the history of theology. It has been set out clearly, for example, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter seven:

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some *voluntary condescension* on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of *covenant* (my emphasis).

What, then, is the principle of the covenant, according to the Confession? In order for God to relate to us, in order for there to be a commitment on the part of God to his people and more broadly to his creation, there had to be a 'voluntary condescension' on God's part. In order for us to have anything to do with God whatsoever, God had first to 'come down', to stoop to our level. So, says Calvin:

For who is so devoid of intellect as not to understand that God, in so speaking, lisps with us as nurses are wont to do with little children? Such modes of expression, therefore, do not so much express what kind of a being God is, as accommodate the knowledge of him to our feebleness. In doing so, he must, of course, stoop far below his proper height.⁵

⁴ The four words in English are actually just one Hebrew word *yhwy*.

⁵ John Calvin, John T. McNeill, and Ford Lewis Battles, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1961), 1.13.1.

What does God's divine 'stoop' look like? It looks like the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8), it looks like the angel of the Lord (which is the Lord himself) calling to Abraham (Gen. 22), or to Moses (Exod. 3), or to Israel (Judg. 2). It is because of his voluntary condescension, that the Lord protects and delivers his people (e.g., Ps. 34:7), and fights for them (e.g., Is. 37:36). All of this 'relationality' on the part of Yahweh, the 'I AM', can only happen because he willingly decided to condescend to our level, to the level of the created.

This is the 'Yarad' principle. It is unveiled explicitly in the symbol of the burning bush and its manifestation of God's inner being. The transcendent One is not a prisoner of his own transcendence, but in his transcendence is able to dwell among his people. Here we have in miniature an extraordinary illustration of that undying biblical principle that God's ultimate purpose in creation, while he maintains his 'God-ness', is to dwell with his people. Throughout all of Scripture, God creates holy space so to dwell with his people, to manifest his immanence until the consummation when there is no temple, for all is holy space and holy time – the ultimate manifestation of what we see in the burning bush. God is not a prisoner of his transcendence, unlike ourselves who are prisoners of our lack of it. As the transcendent One, he dwells among his people; he is transcendent while determining in his love to be immanent as well.

This visual revelation, the act revelation, of the burning bush is a sign, a parable revealing who God is. It is expressive of the principle of divine independence (aseity). The divine name is to be understood covenantally and redemptively. The exegesis of the words, 'I AM,' implies that who God is may be seen and understood from the covenantal redemptive activities that surround the Exodus.

We see this again in the continuity that is stressed between the covenant revelation given to the patriarchs and the new revelation in and through Moses. Yahweh is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Exodus 3 and 6 make it clear that what is to take place in Exodus takes place in the light of the specifics of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Note the significance of the words in Exodus 6:2-6:

God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement.

So if it is true that word and deed revelation are inextricably linked – the deeds exegete the words and the word illumines the deeds – then the revelation at the burning bush expresses not only God's absolute independence (though that is clear enough), but also that in his absolute transcendence he is capable of immanence, and that as the immanent One he reveals himself as the covenant making Redeemer who depends on no one to be who he is and to do what he will do.

This 'Yarad principle' is, in one sense, quite basic to our understanding of all of Scripture. It is the principle that we must use in order to understand just how it is that God can remain who he is while at the same time interacting with his creation. The Yarad principle of the exodus becomes the Emmanuel principle of the new exodus, the

deliverance from bondage to sin of the Lord's people.

Note, for example, how devoid of this basic principle the openness folk appear to be. After stating that Scripture doesn't speak of God as timeless, William Hasker notes:

The other main difficulty about divine timelessness is that it is very hard to make clear logical sense of the doctrine. If God is truly timeless, so that temporal determinations of 'before' and 'after' do not apply to him, then how can God act in time? ... How can he *know* what is occurring on the changing earthly scene? How can he *respond* when his children turn to him in prayer and obedience? *And above all, if God is timeless and incapable of change, how can God be born, grow up, live with and among people, suffer and die, as we believe he did as incarnated in Jesus* (emphasis mine)?⁶

Or consider Gregory Boyd:

My fundamental thesis is that the classical theological tradition became misguided when, under the influence of Hellenistic philosophy, it defined God's perfection in static, timeless terms. All change was considered an imperfection and thus not applicable to God. Given this definition of divine perfection, *there was no way to conceive of God as entertaining real possibilities* (emphasis mine).⁷

Or Clark Pinnock:

According to Scripture, God moves with his people through time. He is even described as wondering what they are going to do next! God says 'I thought, after she has done all this, she will return to me, but she did not return' (Jer. 3:7). God had thought he could bless his people but they proved unfaithful (Jer. 3:19–20). God had planted a pleasant vineyard and put a lot of effort into it but it yielded only wild grapes, and in Isaiah 5:1–4 he asks why. He had hope for things to happen which did not happen and he was disappointed. God existed before creation and before creaturely time but since then has related to the world within the structures of time. God is not thought of in terms of timelessness. He makes plans and carries them out; he anticipates the future and remembers the past. Since creation, divine life has been temporally ordered. God is participant, not onlooker; he enters the time of the world and is not just above the flow of history looking down, as it were, from some supra-temporal vantage point. God is inside not outside time, sharing in history – past, present, and future.⁸

Or, finally, Nicholas Wolterstorff:

If God were eternal, he could not be aware, concerning any temporal event, whether it was occurring, nor aware that it will be occurring, nor could he remember that it had occurred, nor could he plan to bring it about. But all of such

⁶ Clark H. Pinnock, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 128.

⁷ Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 17.

⁸ Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*, Didsbury Lectures, 2000 (Carlisle /Grand Rapids: Patternoster Press/ Baker Academic, 2001), 97.

actions are presupposed by and are essential to, the biblical presentation of God as a redeeming God. Hence God is presented by the biblical writers as fundamentally in time.⁹

Is it possible that the proponents of openness have not seen this Yarad-cum-Emmanuel principle? There are, as a matter of fact, (inadvertent) flashes of insight in some of the openness literature. Pinnock insists, against Robert Strimple's criticism, that open theists are not Socinian since they are Trinitarian and orthodox in their Christology.¹⁰ John Sanders, even more explicitly, claims that his Christology actually organises his thinking about God.

Christology is the great stumbling stone to the classical view of omnipotence. Our views of divine power, providence and sovereignty must pass through the lens of Jesus if they are to come into focus regarding the nature of God. Metaphors such as king and potter must be interpreted in the light of Jesus rather than our normal understanding of kings and potters.¹¹

This is exactly right, though the depth of it seems to escape open theists. The way in which we are to think about God finds its focus, as we have said, in the Yarad principle, which principle itself reaches its climactic expression in Emmanuel, God with us, the person of Jesus Christ.

Let us, then, take seriously the fact that our Christology organises our understanding of God's relationality. How, specifically, does the person of Christ help us to understand who God is and how he relates to us?

We must first recognise that Christ is *the* climactic, quintessential revelation of God *par excellence*. He is the one who is, as Paul reminds us, 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15) and 'in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell' (Col. 1:19). He is, as the angel announced, Emmanuel, that is, *God with us* (Matt. 1:21). 'He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature' (Heb. 1:3).

Without working through a detailed exegesis of these texts, orthodox Christology has always understood these passages in a particular way, a way that negates open theism. We can briefly elaborate on that understanding by looking more closely at another passage, Philippians 2:5-8.

We should recognise at the outset that we do not do justice to this passage simply by concentrating on its Christology. The point the apostle is attempting to make by way of Christology is a point about our own sanctification; he is wanting us to model the behaviour exemplified in Christ, specifically the behaviour that culminated in Christ's incarnation. Given our present concerns, however, we will focus our attention on the Christology at hand. First, the passage from Philippians 2:5-8:

⁹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'God Everlasting', in *God and the Good: Essays in Honor of Henry Stob*, ed. Henry; Clifton Henry; Lewis B. Smedes Stob (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 200.

¹⁰ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 107, n. 122.

¹¹ John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 116. Among the open theists, Sanders seems to give the most credence to the notion of anthropomorphic ideas and concepts in Scripture, but, because of his Enlightenment assumptions, is never able to frame his discussion in terms of orthodox theology. See, for example, Sanders, 21ff. For a fine critique of the open theist's views of anthropomorphic language see Douglas M. Jones, 'Metaphor in Exile', in *Bound Only Once: The Failure of Open Theism*, ed. Douglas Wilson (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 2001).

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus: who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

This has been a controversial passage, not so much because of what it says, as we will see, but because of what it has been twisted to say. There are two central ideas present in this text that relate to our concerns and that have been the focus of various controversies. We will see, however, that these ideas serve to confirm what orthodox Christology has affirmed. Those two ideas are 'form (*morphē*) of God,' and 'made himself nothing (*ekenōsen*).'¹²

What does Paul mean when he says that Christ was 'in the form' of God? We should note first that the word translated 'form' is used here alone in the entirety of Scripture.¹³ For that reason, the determination of its meaning finds its locus within its immediate context.¹⁴ We should also note, as Silva says, that the word itself is characterised by a broad range of meanings, making the immediate context all the more important.¹⁵

Within the context, we find two markers that help us to see just what Paul is telling us. The first marker is the correspondence that is apparent between Paul's phrase 'form of God' and the phrase 'equality with God'. Whatever one makes of the differences between these two phrases, there can be little question that the two are meant to point to the same reality, and that the one helps us see the meaning of the other. According to Silva, 'it would be a grave mistake to ignore Käsemann's point that in the literature of the Hellenistic religions *morphē theou* and *isotheos physis* "are parallel and even become synonymous."¹⁶ Paul's notion of Christ being in the form of God, therefore, is tantamount to the notion of equality. Being in the form of God means being equal to God.

The second marker that helps us to see something of Paul's meaning in this passage lies in the parallel phrase 'form of a servant'. What Paul has in mind in using this phrase is itself further explained by the 'likeness of men'.

The word 'form' in this passage, therefore, is chosen by Paul, in part, in order to communicate two analogous, though not identical, situations.¹⁷ The 'form of God' is further explained as Christ being equal to God. But, as we noted above, Paul is not immediately concerned in this passage to give us a Christian-theistic ontology. He is concerned to present to us the quintessential example of how we as the Lord's people are to think and live. The second use of 'form,' then, refers not so much to the being of

¹² There other phrases and words in this context that offer some difficulty exegetically, among which is, for example, Paul's speaking of Christ as not considering his own position as 'a thing to be grasped' (*harpagmon*). Our purpose in focusing on these two, however, is simply to place the 'Yarad' principle in the forefront of our discussion.

¹³ With the possible exception of Mark 16:12.

¹⁴ This is the case for all words, but is even more important exegetically with hapaxlegomena

¹⁵ Moisés Silva, 'Philippians', in *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary*, ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 115. For the notion of semantic extension, see also Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 77.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁷ Again, given the semantic extension of the term, it is the perfect term to use in this case.

Christ himself, but to his status as incarnate. In that case, 'form' is used to express the role that Christ agreed to when he agreed to be 'born in the likeness of men.'

The clear and initial implication of this text is that the preincarnate Son of God, as the second person of the Trinity, determined voluntarily to come down in such a way that he would identify himself with humanity. He came by taking on our likeness and by taking the role of a servant of the Lord. According to Fee, therefore, the word 'form' can be best understood as 'that which truly characterises a given reality'.¹⁸

What then does Paul mean when he says that this preincarnate Son, who was in the form of God but who took on the form of a servant 'made himself nothing?' Here controversy has raged, especially since, in some translations, the phrase is (properly) translated as 'emptied himself' (NASB). Paul explains to us what he means when he notes that this self-negation, whatever it is, had to do with the fact that the Christ did not count his own equality with God 'a thing to be grasped'.

Whenever ambiguous words are employed, the only proper method of discovery lies in the (less ambiguous) context in which those words appear. The force of what Paul is saying, therefore, should not rest on a supposed resolution to the ambiguity, but, if possible, on clearer signs along the way. In this context and because of it, the meaning of the passage is quite clear.

We are, says Paul, to incubate within ourselves the same mind-set that Christ himself had when he chose to come down to us. More specifically, we are to do 'nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves' (Phil. 2:3). We are not, then, to hold onto whatever status or position we think we might own, but rather to consider that the position or status of others is more significant.

In this light, and because of this context, it becomes clearer to us just what Paul is saying about our Saviour. In his decision to take on the likeness of humanity, he did not simply look to his own position and status, nor did he count that position and status something that he should, in every way, hold onto. Rather he considered the position and status of those who are lower, who could not reach up to his position, and he determined to stoop down to their level.

We should be clear here. Paul is emphatically *not* saying that the reason the Son of God became man was because of something intrinsic in us. Christ did not come because we deserved it, or because there was something in us that motivated his coming. Rather, Paul is pointing out to us the depth and breadth of humility as it is expressed in the decision of the Son of God to become man. He is explaining to us just what humility and even humiliation is. It is the decision to give up what may be rightfully ours for the sake of others. It is to be for someone else rather than for oneself. It is, in a word, to be selfless.

The ambiguous phrases, then, become clearer. It is not as though Christ emptied himself of something; that is not Paul's point. Paul's point is that Christ emptied himself by becoming something that he was not previously, something that, by definition, required humility and, ultimately, humiliation (Phil. 2:8). For Christ to make himself nothing, says Paul, is for him to humble himself, and he humbles himself by being born in the likeness of men, and by becoming obedient to the point of death. The self-emptying is, in point of fact, a self-adding. Hence Turretin:

¹⁸ Gordon D. Fee, 'Philippians,' in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, F.F. Bruce, Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 204.

Here also belongs the verb *ekenōse*, which is not to be taken simply and absolutely (as if he ceased to be God or was reduced to a nonentity, which is impious even to think concerning the eternal and unchangeable God), but in respect of state and comparatively because he concealed the divine glory under the veil of flesh and as it were laid it aside; not by putting off what he was, but by assuming what he was not.¹⁹

We see this principle displayed for us, albeit in nascent form, in the OT as well. We remember Moses' bold request that the Lord display the fulness of his glory to Moses (Exod. 33:18). This, Moses was told, would be certain death. Instead, the Lord, in his mercy, did show Moses his glory, but only as veiled; Moses could only glimpse the back side of the LORD as he passed by the cleft of the rock in which Moses was hidden. Was the LORD less than fully God as he passed by Moses? Certainly not. His proclamation as he passed by, what Luther called the 'Sermon on the Name' was meant to remind Moses that the 'I Am' was present. Rather he was accommodating himself to Moses in a way that demonstrated both his glory (The LORD, the LORD) as well as the veiling of the fulness of that glory. The LORD came down, and showed himself to, even as he hid himself from, Moses.

The 'Yarad-cum-Emmanuel' principle in Philippians should therefore be obvious. Christ made a decision. He made a decision of humiliation. It was not necessary for him to decide to humble himself; he had every right to continue without adding to himself the humiliating status of humanity. But he determined not to. The one who is equal to God, who is in the form of God, who is himself God (John 1:1), did not stop being God (such a thing would be impossible), but rather he took on something that was not previously a part of him. He took on human nature (John 1:14).

Christ does not become the opposite of himself by taking on human nature (contra Barth). It is not as though he gives up deity in order to become man. This pattern is given nowhere in Scripture; it is, in fact, an impossibility. Rather, just as the 'I Am' remains LORD while, at the same time, coming down to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so the second Person of the Trinity, remains God, while coming down to be the God-man. This is the covenant. And, as the Westminster Confession reminds us, Christ is the *substance* of the covenant (WCF 7:6, WLC 35; cf. Col. 2:8ff.).

The Christology we have been delineating here, as we have said, is nothing new. Any cursory glance at the church's position on the hypostatic union will bring out the same points. Moreover, the position of the Chalcedonian Creed is ample evidence that the thinking of open theism is fatally deficient. That Creed reminds us that the incarnation has never been seen as God's abandoning of any of his attributes at all. As a matter of fact, it is in the incarnation that we begin to see how it is that God can relate to his creation, without becoming less than God. The Creed affirms that the Son of God, as

¹⁹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. Jr James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1994), II:314. Though it cannot be pursued here, it is instructive to note that Turretin links an understanding of the Trinity to an understanding of the hypostatic union: 'For as in the Trinity, the unity of essence does not hinder the persons from being distinct from each other and their properties and operations from being incommunicable, so the union of natures in the person of Christ does not prevent both the natures and their properties from remaining unconfounded and distinct' (311). The serious point to be made here is that a confusion or ignorance, or worse, denial of the orthodox notion of Christology could imply the same with respect to the Trinity, such that Christianity could be replaced for another religion altogether.

Most Moved Mediator

God, is to be 'acknowledged in two natures inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably.' The Creed goes on to affirm, concerning this hypostatic union, that with regard to these two natures:

the distinction of natures [is] by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature [is] preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Open theists do not seem to have seen the profound implications of this. They seem mired in a kind of theological Eutychianism, in which there is no way that God can take on another nature until and unless he abandons (at least part of) his own.

If we take the Chalcedonian Creed seriously (and the church, both Catholic and Protestant, has done so since the Creed was written), then the theological priorities of our thinking in this matter become clearer to us. First, we should be clear about the fact that there are two crucial concepts in the Creed, and thus in our thinking about God and his relationship to us, that define the parameters of how we are to understand God's accommodation to us. Those two concepts are 'person' and 'nature'.

For open theists, person and nature are virtually identical. To the extent that God takes on the nature of created reality, to that extent must he be subject to (different aspects of) creation. Historically, however, in orthodox theology, priority has always been given to 'person' over against 'nature.' The reason this is so is that what belongs to 'person' is independent and individuated in a way that what belongs to nature is not. God's accommodation presupposes that he was, and was (Triune) person, before coming down to the created level. It is for this reason, it seems to me, that theology has historically attempted to delineate just who God is, quite apart from his accommodation, in order thereafter to explain God's accommodation itself. God, as we have seen in the OT, or the second *person* of the Trinity, as we see more clearly in the New, just *is* a person with distinct characteristics and attributes, prior to his accommodation to and with his creation.²⁰

While there are careful distinctions here that must be maintained with respect to God (e.g. that God's essence is identical with God himself), there is absolutely no question that what orthodox Christology has always taught is that God came down, in the second person of the Trinity, who was and remains fully God, and he took on a human nature without thereby in any way changing his essential deity. To think, as open theists do, that because God interacts with creation he must necessarily change or in some way limit his essential deity, is, in effect, to fail to see the incarnation for what it is. While we cannot comprehend just what it means for one Person fully to possess two distinct natures, we must affirm it in order for the gospel, in its fullest biblical sense from Genesis to Revelation, to be what it is.²¹

²⁰ As Turretin notes, a person or hypostasis is an 'intellectual *suppositum*', having its own incommunicable existence. A person participates in a nature, which itself (on the created level at any rate) is communicable. For the best summary of this terminology, albeit in a Trinitarian context, see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725: The Trinity of God*, vol. Four (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), esp. 167–95.

²¹ It strikes me that one of the root problems with open theism is that they are, in the end, more rationalistic than the very 'Hellenists' they seek to oppose. To maintain that, in order to relate to creation God must essentially change, is to deny the unfathomable mystery that just is 'God with us'.

A brief word of warning is in order, to myself, and to others who want to set forth and defend the orthodox view of God and his relation to the world. Among defenders of the orthodox view, there seems to me to be some confusion over the concept 'anthropomorphic'. It is thought that, for example, when Scripture speaks of God changing his mind that we are to read that anthropomorphically, but that when Scripture says that God is not a man that he should change his mind, we are to read that 'literally'.

It could perhaps be more helpful if we were to begin to see that all of God's revelation to us is anthropomorphic. Or, to use the more classic terminology, all of God's revelation to us is ectypal. It comes to us from he who is the Archetype, and thus is, by its very nature, ectypal.²² It is, then, essentially accommodated revelation; it is revelation accommodated to our mode of being and our mode of understanding.

Because all of God's revelation is ectypal, however, does not mean that every truth given to us in Scripture automatically and immediately refers to God as accommodated. To paraphrase Kant, though all of our knowledge begins with God's accommodation, it does not follow that all our knowledge arises out of accommodation. Our knowledge of God presupposes his accommodating himself to us, but the very knowledge that he gives us can and does refer at times to that which is non-accommodated, that is, to God apart from, 'outside of,' or 'before' creation.

It may be best, therefore, at least in these discussions, to drop the locutions of 'literal' and 'anthropomorphic' when referring to God and our knowledge of him, as if some of what we know of God has a direct reference point, and other things that we know are simply metaphorical. When Scripture says that God changes his mind, or that he is moved, or angered by our behaviour, we should see that as literal. It refers us to God and to his dealings with us. It is as 'literal' as God being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But we should also see that the God who literally changes his mind, is the accommodated God, the 'Yarad-cum-Emmanuel' God who, while remaining the 'I AM,' nevertheless stoops to our level to interact, Person-to-person, with us. His change of mind does not affect his essential character, any more than Christ dying on the cross precluded him from being fully God. He remains fully and completely God, a God who is not like man that he should change his mind, and he remains fully and completely the God who, in covenant with us, changes his mind to accomplish his sovereign purposes. What else should we expect, when we realise the implications of what it means that God took on human nature for the sake of his people in order, as God, to accomplish their salvation?

God comes in Christ, one Person in two natures, in order that he might be the 'most moved mediator', who alone, as God and man, can accomplish what is needed for us and for our salvation.

²² For the best recent discussion of this idea see Willem J. van Asselt, 'The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought', *Westminster Theological Journal* 64, no. 2 (2002).

The Last Word

The Skim-milk Gospel of Cheap Grace

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Discipleship and Evangelism

One of the textbooks I use in the class is Bonhoeffer's, *Cost of Discipleship*. When I first decided to use the text, I was afraid it might really 'miss' with this generation of students. I mean, the Vietnam war, my war, seems like ancient history to them. The history of the Third Reich is often reduced to an edgy racism for skinheads and hateful people and the background for lots of old spy movies on late-night TV. However, I was, and am, convinced that many evangelicals in the USA today, are in peril of just the kind of power-trip seduction that confused kingdom and culture, nation and faith, and blinded church-going Germans to the false prophets of the Third Reich who did all sorts of things in the name of Jesus while calling other people 'evil-doers'.

Bonhoeffer saw the church of his day bowing the knee to 'cheap grace' and wrote:

Cheap Grace is the deadly enemy of our church. It is grace without price: grace without cost! ... Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine ... an intellectual assent ... Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner ... Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession ... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. (Part I, Chapter 1)

Bonhoeffer's idea of 'cheap grace' is flourishing in our churches, on our campuses, in our homes, and we don't even see it for what it is. Salvation is sold as fire insurance, Jesus is reduced to correct propositional formulas and worship is all about us and the way we like it no matter how many times we sing, 'it's all about you, Jesus'. Cheap grace sells us a comfortable Jesus to whom we sing affectionate valentines. Cheap grace substitutes the fear of the Lord for a fear of the world. Cheap grace hides our light under wonderfully pious lampshades, and cheap grace renders the salt of the earth as just so much tasteless landfill.

Every semester I tell 36 wonderful students in this class: 'Salvation is a free gift of God's grace earned by the work of Jesus Christ alone. And this free gift will cost you everything'.

Bonhoeffer calls the obedience of following Jesus, the discipleship of 'costly grace'. And this is a brand-new idea to many, maybe even most, in my classroom.

My students have had all sorts of reactions to Bonhoeffer's challenging book and his commentary on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that is part of it. Two reactions, however, stand out. First, it has made them angry. They come to my office, sometimes in tears, and ask, 'Why didn't I know this before?' Now, sometimes, it's their own ears. Despite the faithfulness of their parents or their faith community, or their pastor's best exposition of the word, or their most biblical of Sunday School teachers or youth pastors, it is only now, in the new autonomy of these precious college years, that they finally have 'ears to hear'.

But too often, they are angry because they really have never heard the gift and demand of the gospel before. They know every lyric from the top ten on the 'CCM' scene (Contemporary Christian Music), but they don't know the Scripture. The worship services they attend are in fact just really good Christian meetings, designed to promote the organisation, and please the hoped for crowd. The aim is just to make sure the music connects and that no one ends up fearing the Lord. Be comfortable, not confronted. Just be sure to come on back. If a rich young ruler happens to walk away sorrowful, we run after him and make another offer that suits him better. My students sometimes get angry because they've been eating the equivalent of tasty discipleship 'junk food' and they realise they have never tasted the 'meat' of the gospel. One of my students said, 'I've not even been brought up on whole milk – it's one per cent skimmed!'

The second response, which often follows the first, is radical repentance. Shove the junk food away! Let us get serious about the Jesus of Scripture, let us let worship actually lead us to be 'undone' like Isaiah and end up with a 'woe is me' so that we can say 'here I am' – and still go even if it ends up like the rest of the sixth chapter of Isaiah: with a ministry that no one listens to, no one gets, and ends up with less than one-tenth of what we started with. With ears to hear and eyes to finally see Matthew 7, they begin to experience what it means to be the few on the hard path that have entered by the narrow gate. There is the good fruit.

There is simply, obedience to the Word that is heard no matter what.

There, Jesus says, is someone I know, someone I recognise. That's the work that truly bears my name. There is the wise one building on the rock. There is wisdom of which the fear of the Lord is the beginning.

Disciples who repent from lives decorated with cheap grace become evangelists who speak the whole truth in love and find the joy of costly grace in following the real Jesus. I'm convinced that today's students are bored with the cheap grace of discipleship as entertainment. The radical gospel of costly grace bids us 'come and die' and that's the narrow way that leads to a life worth losing.