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The status of justification by faith in Paul's thought: a brief survey of a modern debate

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It is well known that Martin Luther considered justification by faith to be the article of Christian belief by which the Church would stand or fall. From the Reformation period to comparatively recent times, that doctrine was generally held to represent the content or at least the centre of Paul's theology.¹ Since the mid-nineteenth century, however, some have disputed this estimate of that doctrine and given an entirely different appraisal of its status in the apostle's thought, while others have upheld, with or without modification, the traditional understanding. The following survey of the course of scholarly research that bears upon this subject, which makes no claim to being exhaustive, will reveal that four broad positions may be distinguished.

I

The first view regards the doctrine of justification by faith as being of merely subsidiary significance to Paul and considers the centre of his theology to lie elsewhere.

R. A. Lipsius was apparently the first to suggest that there were two trains of thought in Paulinism, the one based on the judicial idea of justification, the other having its starting-point in the conception of the new life created by the Spirit, and that what was really effectual in redemption was union with Christ, brought about by the Spirit, which transformed the believer's personality. A. Sabatier made the first important attempt to prove the existence of different phases in the thought and life of Paul; his theory was that the apostle advances from the simple doctrine of justification by faith, which occupies a dominant position in his *Hauptbriefe*, to a speculative, gnostic development of his ideas in the 'captivity epistles', and he (*i.e.* Sabatier) did not give the same prominence to the coexistence of the juridical and ethical series of ideas as did some

of the later writers. Similarly, H. Lüdemann, who designated these two lines of thought as 'a religious or subjectively ideal line' and 'an ethical or objectively real line' respectively, saw 'a noteworthy transformation . . . at the very centre of Pauline anthropology' whereby the juridical-subjective doctrine of justification by faith was gradually eased out of the central position which it once occupied in Paul's gospel and its place taken by the ethico-physical doctrine of redemption which was 'the apostle's actual, definitive view of man's salvation in Christ'.²

In C. von Weizsäcker's construction of Paulinism, the concept of ethical renewal is replaced by the notion of divine sonship, in which Weizsäcker found the central point of salvation to Paul. As for the judicial doctrine of righteousness, Weizsäcker observed that (i) it did not exhaust the whole of Paul; (ii) it was given prominence only in Romans and Galatians and even there only in a setting of conflict with Jewish doctrine; and (iii) in his independent doctrinal system it did not occupy the chief place.³

To R. Kabisch, Pauline theology was eschatologically orientated, this eschatological orientation being consciously dependent on the Jewish conceptions of his time; and 'justification' (like 'reconciliation') was subservient to salvation, which Paul conceived of as eschatological deliverance from judgment and destruction. Thus, as Lüdemann had made anthropology his starting-point in trying to understand the apostle's doctrine of redemption from a single point of view, so Kabisch took eschatology as his point of departure; both agreed, with the other interpreters mentioned above, that the centre of Paul's doctrine lay elsewhere than in justification by faith.⁴

² For the above information see (on all three scholars mentioned) A. Schweitzer, *Paul and his interpreters*, ET (London: A. and C. Black, 1956), pp. 19f., 32, 28-31; and also (on Lüdemann) W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: the history of the investigation of its problems*, ET (London: SCM, 1973), pp. 28-31.

³ C. von Weizsäcker, *The apostolic age of the Christian church*, ET (London: Williams and Norgate, 1894-1895), vol. I, pp. 141, 373f., 165f.

⁴ A. Schweitzer, *Paul and his interpreters*, pp. 58, 62f.; cf. W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament*, pp. 232-235.

¹ H. D. Wendland, *Die Mitte der paulinischen Botschaft* (Göttingen, 1935), p. 6; H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*, ET (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958), p. 63.

Shortly after the turn of the century, W. Wrede—whom W. G. Kümmel has called 'the real radical' in the field of Pauline studies—gave in his study of the apostle what might be considered an elaboration on Weizsäcker's thesis. Categorically denying the Reformation view of justification by faith as the central point of Pauline doctrine, Wrede claims that 'the whole Pauline religion can be expounded without a word being said about this doctrine', the 'real significance' of which he finds in the supposition that 'it is the *polemical doctrine* of Paul, is only made intelligible by the struggle of his life, his controversy with Judaism and Jewish Christianity, and is only intended for this'. This doctrine, according to Wrede, 'had its immediate origin in the exigencies of Paul's mission to the Gentiles' and furnished 'the theoretical support for emancipation from Jewish institutions', and the true essential Pauline doctrine is not justification, but redemption—redemption from the powers of the present world, flesh, sin, Law, death. How the polemical doctrine of justification is related to the essential doctrine of redemption Wrede does not say.⁵

A similar view of the Pauline doctrine was propounded by W. Heitmüller in the course of a speech delivered at Philipps University in Marburg on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the Reformation. In attempting to demonstrate that Luther's Christianity was not a reproduction or revival of Paul's religion, Heitmüller asserts that whereas with Luther justification stands absolutely in the centre for the simple reason that his conversion consisted in the experience of justification, Paul's conversion was not a matter of sin and forgiveness but had to do only with the question whether the crucified Jesus was the Messiah.

The doctrine of justification was in his case fundamentally a polemical and apologetic doctrine: it first grew upon Paul the missionary in the course of his mission and served to defend his law-free Gentile mission against Jewish-Christian attacks and perspectives. That the heathen do not need to become Jews in order to be blessed, and that the Jewish religion is not capable of leading to salvation, that is its original meaning.

As for Paul's essential doctrine, Heitmüller would find it in the conception of the Holy Spirit as summing up the complex of religious experiences: 'the Spirit makes the Christian certain of sonship,

of salvation.'⁶ A decade later, K. Holl could refer to the 'low' view of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith represented by Heitmüller as a widespread if not dominant view of his day.⁷

It was A. Schweitzer who made perhaps the most elaborate attempt at showing the secondary nature of Paul's doctrine of righteousness by faith. As he sees it, there are in fact three different doctrines of redemption in Paul's theology: the centre of Paul's thought is given in the *mystical* doctrine of dying and rising again with Christ, which replaces by an 'internal' one the 'external interpretation' of Jesus' death and resurrection provided by the *eschatological* doctrine of redemption;⁸ while the *juridical* doctrine of righteousness by faith 'is only a fragment from the more comprehensive mystical redemption-doctrine, which Paul has broken off and polished to give him the particular refraction which he requires'. This judgment is based on 'a series of facts'; (i) In Galatians, the doctrine is not yet independent but is worked out by the aid of the eschatological doctrine of the in-Christ mysticism; (ii) whether in Romans or Galatians, it appears always only in connection with the discussion required by his scriptural argument: what Paul 'wants this subsidiary doctrine for is to enable him, on the basis of the traditional conception of the atoning death of Christ, to conduct his controversy with the law by means of the argument from Scripture'; (iii) the doctrine is not brought into connection with the other facts of redemption (ethics, the sacraments, possession of the Spirit, resurrection), and it is impossible to develop the doctrine of redemption as a whole from the juridical doctrine of righteousness by faith, which is possible only from the mystical doctrine of the being-in-Christ.

Schweitzer holds that Paul's conviction of the essential link between freedom from the law and forgiveness of sins is derived from the mystical doctrine of being-in-Christ, according to which 'those who have died and risen again with Christ are free both from sin and from the Law'. Since, on the one hand, 'there is no argument against the

⁶ W. Heitmüller, *Luthers Stellung in der Religionsgeschichte des Christentums* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1917), pp. 19f.

⁷ K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte. II Der Osten* (Tübingen, 1928), p. 19. Holl himself argues against this view. O. Pfeiderer, while placing the ethical series of ideas alongside the juridical, maintained that both sets of conception held an equal place in the consciousness of the apostle from the first; this emphasis made Pfeiderer's view something unique during the period to which he belonged. Cf. A. Schweitzer, *Paul and his interpreters*, pp. 31f.

⁸ A. Schweitzer, *The mysticism of Paul the apostle*, ET (London: A. and C. Black, 1931), pp. 25 and 74.

⁵ W. Wrede *Paul* ET (London: Philip Green 1907) pp. 123, 147, 92-115, 177f.

validity of the Law to be derived directly from the atoning death of Jesus', and, on the other hand, according to his doctrine of the mystical being-in-Christ, freedom from the law and forgiveness of sins go hand in hand for Paul, he is 'forced by his mysticism to recast the doctrine of the atoning death of Jesus, in the sense of inserting into it the doctrine of freedom from the law'; in other words, he is forced to formulate freedom from the law, which is founded in his mysticism, also as righteousness by faith. The only way, however, for Paul to bring into close connection the two ideas of freedom from the law and the death of Christ is 'by means of logical ingenuities', viz 'by showing by the argument from Prophecy that the only valid righteousness is that which comes from faith alone, and that work-righteousness is incompatible with faith-righteousness'. 'The doctrine of righteousness by faith is therefore,' Schweitzer concludes, 'a subsidiary crater, which has formed within the rim of the main crater—the mystical doctrine of redemption through the being-in-Christ'; it is 'something incomplete and unfitted to stand alone'.

This evaluation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith is followed by H. J. Schoeps, who speaks of it as being in the scheme of Paul's thought 'a fragment of a doctrine of redemption, a polemic doctrine connected with the *abrogatio legis* and unconnected with ethics, a doctrine which may be understood only against the background of the very imminent parousia but not as a timelessly valid truth'.⁹ In the English-speaking world, one writer who has espoused a similar position is C. H. Buck, Jr. Largely on the basis of the non-use of the antithesis faith/works in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians 1—9 and its prominence in Galatians and Romans, Buck draws the 'inescapable' conclusion that 'justification by faith, while not incompatible with Paul's earlier doctrine, was actually formulated and expressed by him for the first time when he found it necessary to answer the arguments of the Judaizers in Galatia'. Buck thinks it 'not at all unlikely' that the term justification derived its importance and at least a part of its meaning (as attested in Galatians and Romans) 'not from Paul's theological vocabulary but from that of its oppo-

nents'.¹¹ In a similar vein, K. Stendahl judges Schweitzer to be 'certainly right' in assigning only a limited function to Paul's teaching about justification, and considers that 'it was his grappling with the question about the place of the Gentiles in the Church and in the plan of God . . . which had driven him to that interpretation of the Law which was to become his in a unique way. Salvation history, then, described especially in Romans 9—11, rather than justification by faith, is to Stendahl the centre of Paul's theology'.¹²

The heartiest endorsement of Schweitzer's evaluation of justification as a subsidiary doctrine in Paul has come from W. D. Davies and, most recently, from E. P. Sanders. Davies adduces the following arguments:

- (i) 'In some contexts justification is merely one metaphor among others employed by Paul to describe his deliverance through Christ, and we are not justified in petrifying a metaphor into a dogma';
- (ii) 'in those contexts where the idea of Justification by Faith is central, we find that this is so only because of certain polemical necessities';
- (iii) Paul's attitude to the old Torah (he practised obedience to it and urged other Jewish Christians to do likewise) is 'only understandable when the doctrine of Justification by Faith is regarded not as the essential pivot of his thought but as a convenient polemic';
- (iv) a doctrine such as Justification by Faith, which has always to be hedged about so as not to lead to antinomianism, a plague that Paul dreaded, and which leads, as Schweitzer has rightly insisted, to an ethical cul-de-sac, cannot have been the dominant factor in the thought of one who could never have separated religion and life'.¹³

⁹ C. H. Buck, Jr, 'The Date of Galatians', *JBL* 70 (1951), pp. 113-122 (121f.) Dr R. T. France kindly informed me that Buck's views are greatly expanded in the latter's book (with G. Taylor), *Saint Paul: a study of the development of his thought* (New York, 1969), and that it has been subjected to analysis and heavy criticism in J. W. Drane, 'Theological Diversity in the Letters of Paul', *Tyndale Bulletin* 27 (1976), pp. 3-26. I have not been able to consult Buck's book for myself while my reading of Drane's article (cf. esp. pp. 10f.) has given me, understandably, no new information on the specific point with which we are immediately concerned (but the article was not), viz. justification as a late formulation in Paul's thought.

¹¹ K. Stendahl, 'The apostle Paul and the introspective conscience of the West', *HThR* 56 (1963), pp. 199-215 (204 with n. 10). This article is reprinted in Stendahl's book, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 78-96 (84f. with n. 10; cf. 25ff.); the latter work also contains (pp. 129-132) Stendahl's rejoinder (see esp. p. 130 for his own statement of his thesis) to E. Käsemann's critique of his article (cf. n. 23 below).

¹² W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1955), pp. 221f.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-226.

¹⁰ H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: the theology of the apostle in the light of Jewish religious history*, ET (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), pp. 123, 196 (cf. 206). Yet, curiously enough, Schoeps can also speak of justification by faith as 'the kernel of Paul's teaching, . . . leading to the mysticism of being in Christ and the total suspension of the Mosaic law' (p. 263).

Davies therefore has no hesitation in relegating the doctrine 'to the periphery . . . of Paul's thought'. As for the real centre of Paul's thought, Davies suggests that this is to be found 'in his awareness that with the coming of Christ the Age to Come had become present fact the proof of which was the advent of the Spirit'.¹⁴

In his attempt to locate a beginning point for the study of Paul, E. P. Sanders notes the debate between E. Käsemann and his critics and makes an observation in the manner of a syllogism: 'the heart of Paul's theology cannot be centred on the individual' (in this Käsemann, Stendahl and others are correct); 'the particular formulation "righteousness by faith" does primarily concern the individual' (so Bultmann, Bornkamm and Conzelmann correctly maintain); hence 'the catch-word "righteousness by faith" must be given up as the clue to Paul's thought'. Sanders accepts Schweitzer's arguments against considering the terminology 'righteousness by faith' as central to Pauline thought as, 'cumulatively considered, convincing', and he maintains with Schweitzer that to take that phrase as the central theme of Paul's gospel is to miss the heart of his theology.¹⁵ In Sanders' view, the central place in Paul's soteriology is taken by the theme of participation: participation in Christ's death so that one obtains 'new life and the initial transformation which leads to the resurrection and ultimate transformation', in Christ's body and in the Spirit.¹⁶ As for the juristic category of righteousness by faith, Sanders holds (a) that it is not a set doctrine with any *one* meaning—'Paul is rather unparticular about terminology' and the definition of the righteousness of faith varies—and (b) that it serves a primarily negative purpose—'as a negative argument against keeping the law as sufficient or necessary for salvation'.¹⁷ It is affirmed more than once that Paul was not conscious of any bifurcation in his own thinking: 'Christ's death was for acquittal and to provide participation in his death to the power of sin, and these are conceived not as two different things, but as one.'¹⁸ Yet, even though Paul himself did not make this distinction, it is clear that 'the "participationist" way of thinking brings one closer to the heart of Paul's thought than the juristic, once the two are distinguished'. Sanders believes that 'there is a basic coherence in all this, but it is not *systematically* worked out. The

precise relation, for example, between acquittal and death to the power of sin did not appear to Paul as a problem which required resolution—a conclusion which is in keeping with Sanders' description of Paul as a theologian and *coherent* thinker but not a *systematic* theologian.¹⁹

If Davies, Sanders and others reveal in their appraisal of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith the abiding influence of Schweitzer's original thesis, Strecker holds (i) that up to the time of 1 Thessalonians (taken to be Paul's earliest extant letter) the *Problematik* of the law had not yet been fully thought through by Paul, since there is in this letter no reflection on the subject of justification; (ii) that Paul's persecution of the churches had not been motivated by the opposition between a Jewish piety based on the law and the (Gentile-)Christian freedom from the law, but its real cause had been the offer of a forgiveness of sins that is declared in the name of Jesus Christ; (iii) that Paul's Damascus encounter with Christ and the origin of his doctrine of justification are 'temporally and materially to be removed from each other', since in Galatians 1: 12ff., despite the fact that in the letter Paul is seeking to combat Judaistic doctrine by working out his message of justification, he does not describe either his conversion or his commission as an apostle in the familiar terminology of justification; (iv) that according to Philippians 3: 4b–11 Paul originally did not interpret his call in the language of justification but rather 'in the Christologico-ontological sense, as the beginning of his recognition of Jesus Christ as the Lord'; (v) that the doctrine of justification forms 'eine sekundäre Redaktionsstufe' over against both the Adam-Christ analogy of Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 and the baptismal doctrine of Romans 6; and (vi) that 'in spite of its juridical terminology it is rightly to be understood only on the basis of Paul's doctrine of redemption which temporally and materially preceded it (on the basis, that is), of the ontological interpretation of the Christ-event as an act of deliverance from enslavement to the powers *sarx, hamartia* and *thanatos*'.²⁰

II

Over against the previous position, the second view

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 502, 520, 433.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 222f. Cf. Davies in *IDB*, III, p. 100b for the same view.

¹⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 438–440, especially 438 (cf. 434), 440.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 514, 502–504, 452–463 (especially 453, 456).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 490–495 (especially 492), 505–506.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 507; cf. pp. 501, 508, 519–520.

²⁰ Georg Strecker, 'Befreiung und Rechtfertigung: zur Stellung der Rechtfertigungslehre in der Theologie des Paulus,' in Johannes Friedrich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann and Peter Stuhlmacher (ed.), *Rechtfertigung. Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1976), pp. 497–508, especially (i) 481; (ii) 483, 505 n. 92; (iii) 485f.; (iv) 487; (v) 497n. 78; cf. 499, 507; (vi) 508.

upholds the fundamental significance and even centrality of justification by faith in Paul's theology.

Wrede's view of justification as a *Kampfeslehre* in Paul was deprecated by J. G. Machen, to whom Wrede's representation of Paul 'reverses the real state of the case':

The real reason why Paul was devoted to the doctrine of justification by faith was not that it made possible the Gentile mission, but rather that it was true. Paul was not devoted to the doctrine of justification by faith because of the Gentile mission; he was devoted to the Gentile mission because of the doctrine of justification by faith.²¹

Similarly, G. Schrenk protested against Wrede's account of the Pauline doctrine on the ground that

Paul must first justify himself before his own earlier thinking, and his whole theology is rooted in this radical clarification of the question of the Law. . . . That justification is a militant doctrine and a keypoint in the Christian mission is because there is exposed in it a new insight concerning the relation of the Law and Christ.²²

Schweitzer's assertion of a dichotomy in Paul between the eschatological-mystical doctrine of redemption on the one hand and the juridical doctrine of justification on the other, also, was challenged by W. Grundmann, who, while accepting the juxtaposition of the two trains of thought, finds their *Einheitspunkt* in Paul's interpretation of the law. Paul's Damascus experience having made righteousness by law an impossibility for him, two inseparable questions arose for Paul out of his situation of legal piety:

(1) Since there is no righteousness of God in the law, where then is it to be found? (2) Since dominion of law and duration of life belong together, how is the situation with regard to the possibility of freedom from the law after death and the possibility of a new life that does not stand under the dominion of law?

Paul answers these questions with his doctrine of the righteousness of faith and his mysticism of

being-in-Christ, respectively. Both are based on the act of God's grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and both trains of thought form a unity, as passages like Romans 3: 24, 6: 7, 7: 1-6; Galatians 2: 15-21; 2 Corinthians 5: 14-21 clearly show. Grundmann concludes that eschatology, mysticism and justification represent a *Dreieinheit* in Paul: 'In the covering frame of the eschatology which realizes itself as redemption-event are its two sides, mysticism of the being-in-Christ and justification by faith, whereby the first provides the presupposition for the last.'²³

The Reformation view of justification as the centre of Paul's preaching was positively upheld by H. D. Wendland. He emphasizes the fact that Pauline theology is basically eschatology, and that this holds also for his doctrine of justification: it is the 'exposition and application' of Pauline eschatology to the position of man before God; it is 'applied' or anthropological eschatology'. Justification is also christological in character: 'In death and new life is Jesus the mediator of justification. There is no other justification-doctrine for Paul than a *christological* one.' Nor is justification unrelated to 'ethics': 'Paul turns the relationship of justification and work (as man's moral behaviour) around: not that the work procures justification, but rather *justification produces the work*, and it can become the power and basis of work, since it is realized in the coming of Christ.' Justification has also an ecclesiological character: 'Reception of the Spirit and baptism as incorporation into the church of God belong together, as also justification and membership in the church'; justification and the sacraments are connected in that 'the sacrament is eschatologico-historical sacrament; it has the event of justification in Christ's death and resurrection behind itself and in itself'; and 'the doctrine of justification and the concept of church are finally bound together in *Christology*'. On the basis of these observations, Wendland concludes that in Paul the doctrine of justification by faith is 'no isolated piece of teaching, but rather a definite concentration and tapering off' of his entire message and theology.²⁴ To M. Dibelius and W. G. Kümmel, similarly, 'there can be no doubt that it is here that the heart of Paul the thinker beats most vigorously, and that it is here that we have to look for the core of his message'; while J. I. Packer adduces five considerations as pointing to 'the centrality of justification in Paul's theological and

²¹ J. G. Machen, *The origin of Paul's religion* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921), pp. 278f.

²² G. Schrenk, *TDNT*, II, p. 202, s.v. *dikaiosynē*. Cf. H. R. Mackintosh, *The Christian experience of forgiveness* (1927; Fontana Books, 1961), pp. 103f., who had written, independently of the debate under review: Paul had 'a Judaist in his own heart, with whom from the outset he was bound to reach an understanding', so that it is reasonable to suppose that 'the great new insight formed part of his personal religion from the first'.

²³ W. Grundmann, 'Gesetz, Rechtfertigung und Mystik bei Paulus,' *ZNW* 32 (1933), pp. 52-65, esp. 61-65.

²⁴ H. D. Wendland, *op. cit.* (see n.1 above), esp. pp. 6, 8, 14, 25, 34, 38, 44, 46, 48.

religious outlook'. These are that (i) the doctrine of justification is the backbone of the Epistle to the Romans, which is 'evidently to be read as a full-dress statement of Paul's gospel'; (ii) justification was evidently the root of Paul's personal religion; (iii) it is to Paul 'God's fundamental act of blessing, for it both saves from the past and secures for the future'; (iv) it is the basic reference point in Paul's doctrine of salvation; (v) it is 'the key to Paul's philosophy of history'.²⁵

If the dispute concerning Paul's doctrine of justification by faith has been largely a problem within Protestant theology, this does not mean that Catholic scholars have been completely silent about it. Thus, O. Kuss has taken issue with Wrede and (especially) Schweitzer, considering that it cannot be conducive to a historical understanding of the Pauline preaching to set the doctrine of righteousness by faith 'rigorously and one-sidedly' over against the mystical doctrine of the being-in-Christ. And K. Kertelge, addressing himself specifically to the problem, bases his conclusion on the twofold consideration that (i) justification is 'the theological centre of gravity in the chief epistles' of Paul, and that (ii) the theological function of the concept of justification is more than of passing, polemical value, but deals with the real need of man in his relation to God—hence the doctrine of justification is 'the real theology, and certainly the anthropologically inflected theology of Paul'. While, therefore, the doctrine is related to Paul's actual historical situation, it is nevertheless a valid expression of his gospel and stands in the centre of his theological reflections.²⁶

The same emphasis is found, not surprisingly, in the works of other German, Protestant scholars. Thus, H. Conzelmann, subjecting various passages where Paul 'cites and expounds stereotyped doctrinal formulae' to a *formgeschichtlich* analysis, concludes that 'where Paul expounds the tradition of the church it is his consistent intention to work out the significance of "faith" in its connection with justification and not in relationship to mysticism'. To Conzelmann, the doctrine of justification is the central theme which holds together and normalizes other themes of the theology: 'in it the criteria for current tendencies in theology will have to be sought', and the correct approach to the ethical

problems and crises of today is, he suggests, 'to strive ever more intensively for the doctrine of justification as the article of a standing and falling theology'.²⁷

But perhaps the stoutest defence in recent years of the centrality of justification in Paul is that which has come from G. Bornkamm and E. Käsemann. In Bornkamm's view, 'the unmistakably personal and peculiar factor in Paul's understanding of the primitive kerygma' consists in the fact that he 'expounds and develops the *Christian gospel as the gospel of justification by faith alone*': 'to set out the gospel concerning Christ as a gospel of justification, and vice versa, is a decisive concern of his whole theology', and 'his whole preaching, even when it says nothing expressly about justification, can be properly understood only when taken in closest connection with that doctrine and related to it'. As for those 'schemes of classification not directly stemming from his doctrine of justification', such as sacramental statements and existential terms, 'they are not to be played off against his gospel of justification, or separated from it or ranked above it. Influential as these mystico-ontological concepts and expressions are, Paul hardly uses them unqualified by his doctrine of justification'.²⁸ In comparable, not to say more forceful, terms, Käsemann affirms—largely in criticism of the position of K. Stendahl whom he charges with 'setting salvation history thematically over against the doctrine of justification'—that 'Paul's doctrine of justification, with the doctrine of the law that belongs to it, is ultimately his interpretation of christology': it is 'the centre of his theology', the 'theme which dominates the whole of his theology'; and while it indeed is 'a fighting doctrine, directed against Judaism', the struggle which it represents is not a merely anti-Jewish affair and is not superseded even today.²⁹

The emphasis thus placed by Bornkamm and Käsemann on the centrality of Paul's doctrine of justification to his whole conception of the gospel and not only in polemical situations is regarded by F. F. Bruce as properly given; against the view of C. H. Buck and W. Wrede referred to above, Bruce maintains that 'the essence of justification by faith

²⁵ M. Dibelius and W. G. Kümmel, *Paul* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), pp. 114f., J. I. Packer, *NBD*, pp. 684a-685a, s.v. 'Justification'.

²⁶ O. Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* (2 parts; Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1963), pp. 129-131; K. Kertelge, 'Rechtfertigung' bei Paulus (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1971), pp. 286, 295-306.

²⁷ H. Conzelmann, 'Current Problems in Pauline Research,' *Interpretation* 22 (1968), pp. 171-186, esp. 175-178, 186; *id.*, 'Die Rechtfertigungslehre des Paulus. Theologie oder Anthropologie?', *EvT* 28 (1968), pp. 389-404, esp. 394-397, 404.

²⁸ G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, ET (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), pp. 115-117, 152.

²⁹ E. Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, ET (London: SCM, 1971), pp. 66 (cf. 63), 73, 76, 80, 164, 70, 71-73.

was more probably implicit in the logic of his conversion'.³⁰

III

A third view dissents *both* from Wrede and Schweitzer's estimate of justification as of merely subsidiary significance in Paul *and* from the opposite view which accords the doctrine a central place.

This view is represented by J. Jeremias, to whom the formula 'justification by faith' is but one of 'a multitude of illustrations' which Paul uses to show to the newly converted what the rite of baptism means to them.

It is the description of God's grace in baptism using a figure taken originally from the judicial sphere: God's grace in baptism consists in his unreserved pardon. It is that formulation of the grace of baptism which Paul created in conflict with Judaism. Therefore it is not a 'subsidiary crater', but it occupies a place of equal importance with all the other descriptions of the grace of baptism—*e.g.* being 'washed' and 'sanctified' (1 Cor. 6: 11). Hence the doctrine 'should not be isolated'; rather, 'we must include justification in all the other sayings interpreting baptism in order to put it in its proper setting'.³¹

In this connection we may note that E. P. Sanders also considers 'righteousness by faith' to be 'only one formulation among many'; he treats 'justification and righteousness' as part of Paul's 'transfer terminology' together with 'participation in the death of Christ', 'freedom', 'transformation, new creation' and 'reconciliation', and concludes from the study of several Pauline texts 'that "justify" as a "transfer" term can be paralleled either with "sanctify" and "reconcile" (referring to past transgressions), or with "set free" (referring to sin as an enslaving power)'.³² This should not, however, mislead one into thinking that Sanders' position as a whole is similar to that of Jeremias, since, as we saw above, Sanders does not regard the participationist and the juristic categories as of equal significance but unequivocally gives priority to the former as representing the heart of Paul's thought.

IV

The fourth position may be described as a modification of the Reformation view of Paul's doctrine

of justification as the centre and content of Paul's gospel.

An outstanding proponent of this view is H. N. Ridderbos, who in general stands firmly within the Reformed tradition. His objection to the Reformed view of this matter is not that it attaches too great an importance to justification by faith; over against Wrede and Schweitzer, he affirms that the doctrine 'unmistakably belongs to the very heart of Paul's preaching'. But, he observes,

by approaching Paul's doctrine exclusively from the standpoint of justification by faith there is a danger of depriving Paul's preaching of its redemptive historical dynamic and of making it into a timeless treatment of the vital question: how is one justified before God? Justification by faith as proclaimed by Paul is rather one *aspect*, although a very central aspect, of the great redemptive event of which Paul knew himself to be the herald, and which he described as the fulness of time in which God has sent the Son (Gal. 4: 4), . . . so that it can now be said, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new (2 Cor. 5: 17).

Ridderbos sees 'the dominating perspective and foundation of Paul's entire preaching' as that of *Heilsgeschichte*, for 'before everything else, he was the *proclaimer of a new time*, the great turning point in the history of redemption, the intrusion of a new world aeon'; and he maintains that such a perspective 'alone can illuminate the many facets and interrelations of his preaching, *e.g.* justification, being-in-Christ, suffering, dying, and rising again with Christ, the conflict between the spirit and the flesh, the cosmic drama, *etc.*'.³³ This view is shared by F. F. Bruce, who, while agreeing (with Bornkamm and Käsemann, as noted above) that justification by faith is central to the Pauline gospel, at the same time recognizes that 'it does not exhaust that gospel', but that 'Paul sets his doctrine of justification, together with his other doctrines, in the context of the new creation that has come into being with and in Christ'.³⁴ It is espoused also by G. E. Ladd, who expresses agreement with Ridderbos (and W. D. Davies) to the effect that the unifying centre of Paul's theology is 'the redemptive work of Christ as the centre of redemptive history'; to him, Paul's conversion meant a recovery of the sense of redemptive history that Judaism had lost: Paul's experience of Christ forced him back beyond the

³⁰ F. F. Bruce 'Galatian Problems. 4. The Date of the Epistle' *BJRL* 54 (1971-1972), pp. 250-267, esp. 261-264. *Cf. id.*, *The epistle of Paul to the Romans* (TNTC; London: Tyndale, 1963), pp. 35-37; 'Some thoughts on Paul and Paulinism,' *Vox Evangelica* VII (1971) pp. 5-16, esp. 10.

³¹ J. Jeremias, *The central message of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1965), pp. 57-66, esp. 60, 63.

³² Sanders, *op. cit.*, pp. 493, 463-472 (especially 472).

³³ H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*, pp. 63-65. *Cf. id.*, *Paul: an outline of his theology*, ET (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 161f., 166f., 173f.

³⁴ F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, p. 40.

Mosaic law to rediscover the promise given to Abraham and to see its fulfilment in the recent events in the person and work of Jesus.³⁵ The same *heilsgeschichtlich* emphasis underlies the proposition of R. B. Gaffin, Jr., that 'not justification by faith but union with the resurrected Christ by faith (of which union, to be sure, the justifying aspect stands out perhaps most prominently) is the central motif of Pauline soteriology'.³⁶

By way of conclusion, we may perhaps make three observations and one suggestion. (i) It is clear that the primary issue in the modern debate on the status of justification by faith in Paul's thought is, in the words of K. Kertelge, 'whether the doctrine of justification plays only a subordinate role in the totality of a doctrine of redemption which proceeds on a multiple track, or whether, from its basic intention, the central place in Pauline theology belongs to it'.³⁷ (ii) With the possible exception of the works of H. D. Wendland and K. Kertelge, there has appeared since Schweitzer propounded

his thesis no monograph which takes up the issue in a fundamental and comprehensive way, although various scholars have expressed their own position with regard to it. (iii) The debate has been carried on mainly among German scholars, and their counterparts in the English-speaking world have by and large taken little part in it. It would seem that a thorough study of the issue by a scholar from the English-speaking world might make a welcome contribution to the debate. (iv) If theological judgments, to be sound, must be firmly rooted in careful exegesis of Scripture, then one of the best approaches—not to say the best approach—to the dispute in question is by way of patient exegesis of Paul's letters, at least those parts of his letters which are pertinent to the subject. Such a study, we submit, will make it abundantly plain that the last of the positions in the above survey approximates most closely the Pauline perspective. At least that is how it has turned out for one student of Paul.³⁸

³⁵ G. E. Ladd, *A theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 374.

³⁶ R. B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and redemption* (ThD thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1969; printed by Westminster Student Service, 1971), p. 143.

³⁷ Kertelge, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

³⁸ Cf. R. Y. K. Fung, 'The relationship between righteousness and faith in the thought of Paul as expressed in the letters to the Galatians and the Romans' (2 vols; unpublished PhD thesis, Manchester University, 1975); idem, 'Justification by faith in 1 and 2 Corinthians,' in D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980).

Mercy Triumphs Over Justice: James 2:13 and the Theology of Faith and Works

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(a) Introduction

Ever since Luther's Prefaces to the New Testament (1522) the book of James has suffered a great deal of abuse at the hands of Bible scholars. Some have come to the point of doubting whether the book is Christian. Bultmann says of James in his *Theology of New Testament*: 'Every shred of understanding for the Christian situation as that of "between-ness" is lacking here. The moralism of the synagogue has made its entry.'¹

At the same time recent advances in New Testament studies have illuminated many aspects of the setting and character of the epistle. M. Dibelius pointed out in 1920 the indebtedness of James to the Greek and Jewish paraenetic traditions. He claimed that James is best understood as a 'text which strings together admonitions of general

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ethical content'.² Though we may debate some of Dibelius' conclusions, it is hard to deny his general view that James represents a practical manual of Christian instruction addressed to early Christians in general (rather than to any particular church). Most would also agree with him that James does not contain a developed theology, but features rather early reflections on the Christian life in the light of the teaching of Jesus.³

Further study has likewise illumined the special relation between James and the logia of Jesus, especially the teaching that makes up what we call the sermon on the mount.⁴ Its setting has been further explained by the discoveries at Qumran and their revelations about Jewish community life at the time of Jesus. Parallels between James and Qumran are so interesting that T. H. Gaster concluded: 'the Dead Sea Scrolls indeed open a window upon the little community of Jewish Christians clustered around James in Jerusalem. These men may have been originally the urban brethren of the hardier souls that betook themselves to Qumran.'⁵

¹ (London: SCM, 1955), Vol. II, p. 163.

² *Der Brief des Jakobus* (1920) ET of the 11th edition revised by H. Greeven (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 3.

³ Dibelius however surely overstates the matter when he says: 'James has no theology.' *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴ E. Lohse, 'Glaube and Werke' *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 48 (1957), pp. 9ff. Cf. 'This epistle is alive with the ... home bond between James and Jesus.' James Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 18.

⁵ T. H. Gaster, ed. *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (Garden City: Doubleday, Anchor, 1958), intro. p. 17.

If exegesis is the attempt to find—as James Robinson has put it—‘the point originally scored’, we must take very seriously this background in order to understand the audience James had in mind. It is with these conditions in mind that James speaks and that we must hear. We hope to show that a closer attention to James’ actual intention will help us overcome some of the supposed difficulties of interpretation. James is writing then a practical treatise for Jewish Christians, not only in Jerusalem, but throughout the Roman empire. He writes about AD 60,⁶ just before the first severe persecution breaks upon the Church, but at a time when behaviour within the community and its attitude toward those outside have already become a problem.

(b) The Problem Posed: The Structure of James 2

The issue in the interpretation of James 2 has become problematic whenever James and Paul are set over against each other as theological opponents. Paul stresses faith as the sole means of justification; James insists faith and works must go together. Surely, this line of thinking concludes, we have here an example of theological diversity in the NT which cannot be reconciled. James Dunn for example concludes:

It is obvious then that what is reflected here is a *controversy within Judaism*—between that stream of Jewish Christianity which was represented by James at Jerusalem on the one hand, and the Gentile churches or Hellenistic Jewish Christians who had been decisively influenced by Paul on the other.⁷

But we hope to show that James and Paul were using their terms differently and in any case addressing themselves to different situations. To support this we will seek to examine the context of James’ statement in the entire second chapter as evidence for the fact that ‘works’ in James are the ‘doing of mercy’ that was required of God’s covenant people in the OT and that is to be the special characteristic of Christians, what James elsewhere calls the ‘law of liberty’ (1: 25 and 2: 12).

The central teaching of James is found in the second chapter and consists in two related sections: vs. 1-12 on partiality in the assembly, and vs. 14-26 on the interrelationship of faith and works. Verse 13 stands between those sections and provides a link between them as well as giving a clue to the point he wishes to make in the chapter. Let us examine this verse first:

For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment (RSV).

To a Jewish mind judgment would at once call to mind the final judgment at which God would bring about final justice. The idea James expresses here is common in Jewish literature. As an example we may quote the following from the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs:

⁶ R. V. G. Tasker, *The General Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 28.

⁷ *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Philadelphia Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 251, 252. Italics his.

Have therefore yourselves also, my children, compassion toward every man with mercy, that the Lord also may have compassion and mercy upon you. Because also in the last days God will send His compassion on earth, and wheresoever He findeth bowels of mercy He dwelleth in him. For in the degree in which a man hath compassion upon his neighbours, in the same degree hath the Lord also upon him (Zeb. 8:1-3, (Charles ed.)).

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As elsewhere in James, however, what was common in Jewish tradition is recalled in the light of the fulfilling word of Jesus' teaching:

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Mt. 5: 7; cf. Jas. 1 : 5, 22 and 5: 12).

The particularly Christian element, and that which characterizes Jesus' teaching in a particular way is found in the second half of the verse: Mercy boasts, glories, or triumphs over judgment. That is, mercy does not merely vindicate itself, it is able to triumph. These two phrases then expressing related ideas, in a kind of synthetic parallelism, point both back to the previous verses and ahead to those which follow, and, we will see, summarize the teaching that James intends to give in the chapter.

Verses 1-12. The idea of judgment in v. 13 brings to mind not only the final judgment, but that judgment which we are called upon to exercise in our human affairs. Verse 1 is a counter example to the righteous judgment that God will give at the end of history. Here discrimination rests on outward and external standards. The word for partiality, *prosopolempsia*, is found only here in the NT but reflects the semiticism, *prosōpon lambanō*, and recalls Deuteronomy 10: 17 (LXX) where God '*ou thaumazei prosōpon*'. One cannot impress God with his appearance, and God's people are to be similarly unwavering (interestingly the word for 'wavering doubt' in 1: 6 and 'distinction' in 2: 4 are the same in Greek). In Job 34: 19 it is this characteristic of God, his not showing partiality, which qualifies him to govern.

This possibility of impartial treatment in human affairs lies at the basis of all human justice, and the author clearly has this human judgment in mind as well as God's final judgment. The different instructions given to visitors in verses 2 and 3 is a clear allusion to Rabbinic instructions for those appearing before the tribunal, as R. B. Ward has pointed out. Commenting on Deuteronomy 16: 19 R. Ishmael says: 'If before a judge two men appear for judgment, one rich and another poor, the judge should say to the rich man: "Either dress in the same manner as he is dressed, or clothe him as you are clothed" ' (Dt. R. Shofetim, V, 6). In another place the instructions read: 'You must not let one stand and the other sit' (Sifra, Kedoshim Perek, 4, 4). The allusion is so obvious that Ward believes the author of James actually has in mind two members of the community appearing before a tribunal.⁸ He makes this suggestion to account for the phrase 'among yourselves' in verse 4 which he takes to mean that both must already be members of the community (he also points out that 'synagogue' can be used of the tribunal).

⁸ 'Partiality in the Assembly' *Harvard Theological Review* 62 (1969), pp. 87-90.

While the tribunal must surely be in the writer's thinking, we would rather see this as an exhortation to impartial hospitality, for, as we will see, it is this idea that becomes prominent in the second section.

But James' allusion to the tribunal—which would have sprung readily to the listener's mind—is quite intentional. The author is making here an argument from the lesser to the greater. That is, if this kind of impartiality obtains in the court, how much more appropriate is it to the messianic community where the royal law of love reigns (v. 8)?

The fact that James focuses on rich and poor deserves attention in this connection. Dibelius points out that the usage of 'the poor' in James continues the OT tradition which had come to identify the pious with the poor. The Messianic era was to come and bring salvation to the needy (Is. 61: 1 and Lk. 4: 18-21). By the time of the NT, poverty had taken on a religious nuance that is reflected here. James must have recalled Jesus' promise that the normal social stratification was being overturned (Lk. 6: 20ff.), and this background must have given a note of irony to his instructions in these verses. In verses 5 and 6 James makes his point in two ways. First God has chosen those who are needy to enjoy the riches of faith and to be heirs of his kingdom. Jesus did not come to call 'righteous' but sinners—we shall have more to say on this theme below. Secondly, the rich prove their enmity to Christianity by dragging believers into courts (v. 6. The court system is obviously working in favour of the rich and against the poor, which was the reverse of God's intention), and, by doing this, they blaspheme the name by which Christians are called (v. 7). One thinks here of Paul's vision on the road to Damascus wherein his persecution of Christians was considered an attack on Christ himself. The irony is this: those who were the poor of this world were beginning to give honour to those who were well clad (notice James does not say 'rich man' in verse 2), and to dishonour the poor man thus playing the role of the very rich who drag them into courts. James probably has no specific situation in mind, but fears, as Dibelius notes, a gradual acceptance of this world's standards of judgment.⁹ Sadly the history of the Church has all too often borne out James' fears.

We are in a position now to draw these brief comments together and see the point of verse 13a.

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Showing mercy is the way that love will express itself in this new community. This will involve at the very least a welcome for the poor (as for the rich) and it will lead to an active outgoing compassion toward all those in need (see 1: 27).¹⁰ Moreover the judgment that God will bring will be directly related to the judgment we pass on those around us (*cf.* Mt. 6: 14ff: and 18: 23-35).

Verses 14-26. James now follows Jesus' teaching further. It is not enough that we show no partiality. That is after all a negative conception. Implicit in these verses (and hinted at already in verse 8) is a more inclusive idea that the author expresses in the phrase: 'Mercy triumphs over

⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 39-45.

¹⁰ J. Cantinat, *Les épîtres de Saint Jacques et de Saint Jude* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1973), p. 137.

justice,' and which bursts onto the centre of the stage in verses 14-26. James begins by asking in verse 14: what good is faith apart from works? Here it is crucial that we understand what he means by 'works'. Against the background of verse 8 he explains in verses 15 and 16 what he has in mind: works are giving to a brother or sister what they need. It is in a word, the gift of hospitality, an open giving of yourself and your goods to the needy. Notice that these expressions of love are not strictly speaking demanded by the law. They are expressions of doing mercy that go above and beyond the demands of the law—the second mile of the Sermon on the Mount—but that by that very fact reflect the character of God himself.

That this is the intent of the passage is evidenced by the use of Rahab as an illustration and arguably lies behind the reference to Abraham as well. Rahab is shown righteous specifically in her opening her home to the spies. In spite of the social and economic reasons why she should not have done so, she received them freely. Abraham too was known for his hospitality (see Gn. 18: 4-8). In fact Ward believes that this is James' main point in mentioning this father of faith. He contends Abraham was so well known for his hospitality that this needed no emphasis. The meaning of verse 23 then (which quotes Gn. 15: 6 LXX) could be that because Abraham had proven himself a friend of God (by his hospitality) he was acquitted at his trial by not having to offer up Isaac.¹¹

This then is how mercy triumphs, not just in showing impartiality, but in a loving hospitality and welcome for those in need. But there is an added irony in the choice of Rahab as an example. For here it is not strictly the community that lies open to those outside, but mercy has triumphed to such an extent that an outsider—a Gentile and a harlot—herself exhibits the character of doing mercy, just as the Samaritan has done in Jesus' parable. The kind of good works that Christ had come to initiate overturn all our social expectations: the hungry he has filled and the rich he has sent empty away (Lk. 1: 53).

(c) Illumination of the setting of James

Three areas of the context of James are especially significant for understanding the epistle. First James reflects something of the concerns of the Jerusalem Church in its primitive stage: still very Jewish in character and not yet aware of its universal mission. Then James reflects a close acquaintance with the OT Scriptures, especially in its Greek translation. And finally he reflects a close awareness of the teaching of Jesus, especially that which finds expression in the Gospel of Matthew.¹²

As to the context of the early church one can easily imagine the situation pictured in the early chapters of Acts as a background of James' teaching. Acts 2: 45, for example, gives us a glimpse of the spontaneous love for one another that characterized that first group of believers. The initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit created a natural openness and sharing and it is surely with these early days in mind that James writes his letter. He is painfully aware that the first flush of loving

¹¹ R. B. Ward, 'The Works of Abraham' *Harvard Theological Review* 61 (1968), pp. 286, 288, 289.

¹² Cantinat, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 28.

enthusiasm had not lasted. The unity had begun to give way to a partiality that judged people by human and external standards. As we noted above James fears that believers might lose that essential mark that set them out as God's own people: that loving concern for one another that reflected their faith in God.

But the phrase James employs in 2: 13, *poiēsanti eleos*, shows that he has in mind the larger OT context as well. There God's people were to respond to their election by obeying his voice and keeping the covenant, in this way he would be their God and they his people (Ex. 19: 4, 5). True they were to confess in their worship that God is one, as the famous Shema of Deuteronomy 6: 4 records. James clearly has this text in mind in 2:19; believing this he says, you do well *kalōs poieis*. But Israel was also to choose life by keeping the commandments (Dt. 30: 16-20). And so it came to be regarded as a special sign of the covenant people that they, reflecting God's own mercy toward them, showed mercy, especially toward the unfortunate. The righteous, says the Psalmist, is 'ever giving

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liberally and lending' (Ps. 37: 26). But unfortunately Israel and Judah all too often came to interpret their covenant obligations in terms of a strict keeping of the law, so that the prophets had to offer a critique of their obedience. They were a people who followed with their lips, but whose hearts were far from God (Is. 29: 13 quoted by Christ in Mt. 15: 8). And it was just at the point of coldness toward those in need that this hypocrisy showed itself. Jeremiah had to remind the people to 'do justice and righteousness, deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed' (22: 3). Hosea reminded the people that God required mercy and not sacrifice' (6: 6); Micah listed God's requirements as: 'Doing justice and loving mercy (6: 8). Finally Zechariah is similar to James 2: 13 when he urges the people to: 'Judge truly and show kindness and mercy *eleos ... poieite* to your brother,' which he goes on to define as not oppressing the widow and the poor (7: 9, 10).

The third context of the book of James is the teaching of Jesus. Perhaps because James was the brother of Jesus¹³ and benefited from close association, he makes significant use of the logia of Jesus. Three instances make direct reference to Jesus' words (Mt.1: 5-7:7; Mt.1: 22-7:24; Mt. 5: 12-5: 34-37).¹⁴ Beyond this the background of some of James' teaching must certainly be the Lord's teaching. The flowers that fade in 1: 10, 11 and the spring and two kinds of water in 3: 11 are two examples. But even more important for our purposes than specific references to Jesus' words is the echo of his voice to be found in James' prophetic critique of the Christian community's self-understanding as God's people.

To take but one example from the teaching of Jesus let us recall Luke's account of the parable of the great supper (Lk. 14: 12-24). In this parable, J. A. Sanders believes, Jesus is offering a prophetic critique of what the religious leaders of his day had done with the Deuteronomic

¹³ See most recently the discussion of this in Franz Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief* (Frieberg: Herder, 1975), pp. 7, 8.

¹⁴ Discussed in Lohse, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

doctrine of election.¹⁵ As their fathers before them they had come to see their place in God's call as a special privilege which God would not revoke. They, in the terms of the parable, were sure who would be invited to the messianic banquet and who be excluded. They even believed they knew the guest list and the seating arrangement!¹⁶ In other words, they had completely lost sight of the fact that God's call—the call they were to echo—was itself a 'showing mercy' to the needy and was intended to include as many as had need, even, or shall we say, especially, if these do not meet our human expectations about goodness ('Go out to the highways and hedges' 14: 23). It was this idea which underlay much of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and which James reiterates in his book, especially in the second chapter. Righteousness is not a matter of calculating observance of laws, but it is a spontaneous, overflowing expression of love. In James' language its harvest is sown in 'peace by those who make peace' (3: 18).

(d) Conclusion

We are now in a position to draw these brief observations together and suggest the implications for a comparison of James and Paul. There are two major theological streams in James which are interrelated: Christians are to reflect God's merciful call to the poor and to realize his wisdom in their lives (*cf.* 1: 5). We have focused only on the first of these, but it is not hard to see the connection between the two. The one who makes distinctions by human standards does not show wisdom, he is not expressing the firm, well-grounded character of God in his judgment.¹⁷ J. A. Kirk has argued that wisdom functions in James in the same way that the Holy Spirit functions in the life of the believer in Galatians, giving us good fruit and making us like God (*cf.* 3: 17,18). He concludes: 'In James wisdom is that which enables man to continue in steadfastness, which produces as its real fruit the man who is perfect and complete.'¹⁸ According to James then this perfection is reflected in a special way by our hospitable receiving of the needy. It is as though James is writing an extended commentary on Jesus' words: 'He who receives you, receives me' (Jn. 13: 20, *cf.* Mt. 18: 5).

What then can we say about James' relation to Paul? We have not spoken of the background of Paul's teaching. But if we had we would have found that Paul's Gentile mission provided a wholly different context from James' ministry in Jerusalem. James for his part clearly speaks from an OT and

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¹⁵ Luke's Great Banquet Parable' in J. L. Crenshaw, ed. *Essays in Old Testament Ethics* (New York: KTAV, 1974), p. 255.

¹⁶ Sanders notes such lists were well known in Qumran, *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁷ Dr Newton Flew has suggested that James 1: 1-10 lists all the topics James will cover in his letter, verse 2 introducing 1: 12-27 and verses 3, 4 all of chapter 2. If this is so it lends weight to the view that steadfastness and perfection are shown supremely in receiving the needy. This whole question of the structure of James is discussed in P. B. R. Forbes, 'The Structure of the Epistle of James,' *Evangelical Quarterly* 44 (1972), pp. 147-155.

¹⁸ J. A. Kirk, 'The Meaning of Wisdom in James: An Examination of a Hypothesis,' *New Testament Studies* 16 (1969), p. 31.

William Dyrness, "Mercy Triumphs Over Justice: James 2:13 and the Theology of Faith and Works," *Themelios* 6.3 (April 1981): 11-16.

Jewish view of faith and works. Faith for him means merely the intellectual belief in monotheism.¹⁹ To the Jew this faith is 'meritorious, if it is a quality of obedience leading to performance of good works'.²⁰

By contrast James' use of 'works', while growing out of OT ideas, is markedly different from the 'works' of Judaism and of Paul. They are not the 'works of the law'. Rather they are that which fulfills the royal law of love, the showing of the mercy of God himself. It is this which reveals the presence of genuine (that is living) faith. James in other words reflects Jesus' prophetic attack on the ethic of election and law keeping, and, in doing so, uncovers the real intention of God's calling of his people in the OT. Paul on the other hand represents a theological reflection on Jesus' person and work and the subsequent deepening of the uniquely Christian conception of faith as the response of the whole person to the revelation of God's love. James interprets Judaism in the light of Jesus' teaching. Paul develops Christian truth against the background of Judaism. Professor Jeremias puts the matter in these terms: Paul is speaking of Christian faith and Jewish works; James speaks of Jewish faith and Christian works.²¹

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¹⁹ D. O. Via, Jr, 'The right strawy epistle reconsidered,' *Journal of Religion* 49 (1969), p. 256 and J. Jeremias 'Paul and James,' *Expository Times* 66 (1954), p. 370.

²⁰ Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 225.

²¹ Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

Three Current Challenges of the Occult

Anthony Stone

We welcome this first contribution from Anthony Stone, formerly of Oxford. He is currently studying for a post graduate degree from the United States.

This article discusses challenges of the occult in the three areas of interpretation of scripture, astrology (as a particular occult subject) and the use of power.

One way of defining the occult is to list things such as magic, spiritism, card reading, and so on. Otherwise it may be defined simply as the supernatural without God.

I A challenge in the interpretation of scripture: Are there hostile spiritual powers?

If there are no hostile spiritual powers, all psychic and spiritual experiences arise either from natural human faculties or from God. But if hostile spirits exist, the number of possible sources is three. If there are only two sources, the occult cannot be

particularly dangerous, and may even be helpful spiritually.

Although the biblical writers themselves clearly believed in the existence of evil spirits, many today would demythologize, reinterpret or otherwise explain away this belief. We find disbelief in a personal devil, demon possession reduced to a synonym for illness, and so on. Even some of the more conservative may deny that Satan is active today.

We shall approach this question by looking briefly at (a) scripture, and (b) experience.

(a) **Important scriptural passages.** The cross is of central importance here. Jesus himself interpreted his death as due to 'the power of darkness' (Lk. 22: 53) and said that 'the ruler of this world' would be cast out (Jn. 12: 31; cf. 14: 30; 16: 11). Christ is now far above every *archē* (principality), *exousia* (authority), *dynamis* (power), *kuriotēs* (dominion) and every other name (Eph. 1: 21; cf. 1 Pet. 3: 22);

these terms being names of orders of angels in Jewish thought.¹

In Ephesians 6: 12 *archai* and *exousiai* were among the 'spiritual hosts of wickedness', and in Colossians 2: 15 Paul states that the *archai* and *exousiai* were defeated on the cross. The Colossian passage is a much discussed one. Alford² held that 2: 15 refers only to the angels who mediated the Mosaic law (and that the angels in 2: 18 are holy angels). Many scholars do not take this view, especially with improved understanding to the first century world-view; they understand 2: 15 to declare the defeat of hostile cosmic powers.³

Hebrews 2: 14f. states that Christ's death removes the fear of death by 'destroying' the devil. This verb for 'destroy' (*katargeō*) is not always as strong as in English. The thought in Hebrews is that the devil is frustrated in his work of binding people by their fear of death. The devil is still active, and we are all engaged in spiritual warfare (Eph. 2: 2; 6: 11-13; 1 Pet. 5: 8f.). However, Christ's victory has made certain the final destruction of Satan and his angels (the demons; evil spirits) (Mt. 25: 41; Rev. 20: 10).

We conclude that these matters are an essential part of what the Bible teaches.

(b) **The place of experience.** Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis⁴ produced a comprehensive treatment of Satanic deception and oppression of believers, based on her experiences after the Welsh revival at the beginning of the 20th century. Dr Kurt Koch's early work⁵ reveals connections between Satanic activity and the occult, such as those involved in occult practices developing an aversion to Christian things, and the power of Christ giving release from the ill effects of the occult.

We must avoid the trap of arbitrarily interpreting the Bible according to our own situation, but the

¹ Cf. 1 Enoch 61: 10; angels of principality and angels of power; *Test. Levi* 3: 8 (*thronoi kai exousiai*); 2 Enoch 20: 1, given as: dominions, orders, governments, . . . thrones, in R. H. Charles, *The apocrypha and pseudepigraphia of the Old Testament*, Vol. II (Oxford, 1913); but as: lordships, principalities, powers, . . . thrones, in W. R. Morfill and R. H. Charles, *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (Oxford, 1896); both lists being equated with the names in Colossians 1: 16.

² Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, Vol. 3 (1865).

³ See, e.g., J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (1875); Bishop Ellicott, *St Paul's epistles to the Philippians, the Colossians and Philemon* (1888); R. Leivestad, *Christ the conqueror* (London, 1954), pp. 92-115; R. P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1974), pp. 10-15.

⁴ Jessie Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts, *War on the saints* (abridged edn) (Poole: The Overcomer Literature Trust, Fort Washington: The Christian Literature Crusade, 1977).

⁵ K. E. Koch, *Christian counselling and occultism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978), pp. 188, etc.

error would seem to be to deny the New Testament view when demonic activity is not apparent.

We may conclude that experience bears out the belief that the evil spirits described in the Bible are a reality. There are then *three* sources of our experience.

The next challenge concerns a particular topic in occultism: astrology.

II The challenge of astrology: What if it works?

Argument about astrology is sometimes limited to trying to prove that it cannot work. If, however (as in an instance known to the writer), a person's opposition to astrology is merely the belief that it does not work, a successful astrologer can make such opposition collapse. In any case, this approach usually assumes (wrongly, as I shall try to show) that astrology is an attempt to trace celestial influence. Thus Galileo rejected the suggestion that the moon influences the tides, as an astrological fancy.⁶

If, in spite of what some dictionaries and astrologers may say, astrology is not an attempt at a science of celestial influences, the alternative is that it is divination. This distinction, vital for the preliminary question of the nature of astrology, will now be explained.

Table 1 Science and divination contrasted

SCIENCE	DIVINATION
1. Studies empirical relationships	1. Uses non-empirical relationships ('symbolic connections')
2. Uses regularities	2. Uses chance and/or 'intuition'
3. Rejects inadequate theories	3. Retains all methods
4. Theories are public	4. Rules are not explained
5. Undogmatic	5. Authoritarian
6. Success expected	6. Success doubtful

Science and divination. The main features of science (see Table 1) are (1) the study of empirical relationships by direct or indirect observation; (2) interest in regularities, especially for prediction; (3) rejection of inadequate theories.⁷ It follows that: (4) scientific theories are public; (5) science is undogmatic (ideally); and (6) success is expected.

An example of divination is the use of the Chinese classic, *I Ching*. The user mentally poses a question and then spins coins to pick out, by the combination of heads and tails, one of the book's 'hexagrams' (*i.e.* a diagram of six parallel lines, each either broken or unbroken). Each hexagram

⁶ Michel Gauquelin, *The cosmic clocks* (Granada, 1980), p. 142.

⁷ By falsification: Karl R. Popper, *The logic of scientific discovery*¹⁰ (Hutchinson, 1980).

is associated with a cryptic text which the user has to apply to his or her particular circumstances in order to answer the original question.

The characteristics of divination⁸ (cf. Table 1) are just the opposite of those of science: (1) there is no demonstrable empirical relation between the divinatory signs (e.g. the hexagrams) and what they are taken to signify. Instead, symbolic connections are used. (The commentary on the *I Ching* interprets the hexagrams in terms of qualities based on whether the lines are broken or unbroken.) (2) Chance and intuition are used, rather than regularities.

Thus (3) a diviner may call a particular method of divination inadequate if he or she is unsuccessful with it, but there is no way of obtaining a consensus that a certain method has been falsified. Hence all methods of divination coexist. (4), (5) Rules of divination are laid down without explanation and the choice of a particular method is for individual reasons. (6) Success is uncertain (though not entirely lacking).

Astrology as divination. Indian astrology includes a wider range of methods than the Western form, making it easier to see the divinatory nature of the subject.

In Indian astrology there are various ways of constructing a new horoscope for a person whose original horoscope and time of birth are irretrievably lost. Some of these methods use the number of people present when the client approaches the astrologer, the direction the client faces, or similar data.⁹ It is not thought that the new horoscope will be the same as the old one, only that the astrologer will be able to predict correctly from it. This is clearly a divinatory approach using multiple methods and symbolic connections based on chance.

Another interesting example concerns answering a query from a horoscope constructed for the time the query is made. One work¹⁰ uses a rough *approximation* to the time (based on shadow measurement) and also *modifies* it so that when the sun is in the same position before or after noon, and is in the same position north or south of the equator but moving northwards or southwards, four different times are used although the actual time of day is the same in all four cases. This is an attempt to give different astrological qualities to these four periods of time. The result is another set of symbolic connections.

⁸ This section is concerned only with divination by external signs.

⁹ Varahamihira's *Brihat Jataka*, ch. 26.

¹⁰ Padmaprabhu Suri's *Bhuvana Dipaka*, 55.

Western and Indian astrology share some other features of this kind, including the use of additional, imaginary planets and 'rectification' of birth times (by *astrological* methods) in order to produce more appropriate predictions.

Some astrologers, however, use accurate birth times and exact positions of the planets. Does this represent a scientific enclave *within* astrology? The answer must be no, because the horoscope is still a set of symbols, interpreted with the help of symbolic connections and intuition. Astrologers follow different systems in many of the details of astrology, and the rules have not been subject to falsification.

Astrology falls under God's condemnation both explicitly (e.g. Je. 10: 2) and also as divination (e.g. Dt. 18: 9-14).¹¹ It follows that any use of astrology will be spiritually dangerous. It should never be 'tried out'. However, it is possible to study many aspects of astrology from the outside, without any involvement in the predictive process itself.

Celestial influence as science. Just as the moon's gravitational pull causing the tides is a scientific fact, many other examples of celestial influence are now being discovered by scientists.¹² One author speaks of 'a new science of cosmic influences'.¹³

One of the most detailed (and therefore somewhat technical) surveys of this 'new science' is contained in a book by Dr G. Dean,¹⁴ a scientist-cum-astrologer. Dean was interested in evaluating the objective validity of the large number of varying methods and rules used by different astrologers, as well as surveying other work on cycles, *etc.* He is very strict about statistical significance, and so is taking a scientific approach.

For Dean, the most important work is that of the French scholar, Michel Gauquelin¹⁵ (not an astrologer), who has found statistically significant correlations between certain personality traits and certain planetary positions at birth. (This does not give rise to any rule of prediction, since only about 20% of the people showed the effect.) Dean says that Gauquelin's results

¹¹ The AV 'observer of times' was a diviner of uncertain type.

¹² See Lyall Watson, *Supernature* (London: Hodder Paperbacks, 1974); Michael Gauquelin, *Astrology and science* (London: Mayflower Books, 1972); *The cosmic clocks* (Granada, 1980), Guy Lyon Playfair and Scott Hill, *The cycles of heaven* (London: Pan Books, 1979).

¹³ This is the title of Gauquelin, *Astrology and science*, Part III.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Dean, *Recent advances in natal astrology/ A critical review 1900-1976* (Recent Advances, Monksilver, St Boniface Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight, PO38 1PJ, 1977).

¹⁵ Dean, *op. cit.*, pp. 380sq.; also the works in footnote 12.

provide, for the first time, rigorous and objective evidence about the basic fundamentals of astrology, upon which everything else depends.¹⁶

This conclusion depends on Dean's definition of astrology as 'the study of correlations between living organisms (especially man) and extraterrestrial phenomena'.¹⁷ But since astrology, as traditionally pursued, has not had a scientific approach but a divinatory one, it is better not to use the term 'astrology' for the scientific investigation of celestial influences and correlations. We may then say, with Gauquelin, that his results have nothing to do with astrology, but only with science.

What if it works? Dean¹⁸ explains some of the ways in which astrology may come to be believed for the wrong reasons, such as gullibility; He also notes that 'intuition' can give correct results, even from wrong horoscopes.¹⁹

Indian astrologers often stress the need for 'intuition' if predictions are to be correct. What is meant is that as the astrologer considers the horoscope, the predictions to be made come into the mind. Naturally, this approach opens the astrologer to the influence of outside forces. That demonic forces are involved, at least in some cases, is illustrated by the experience of a man known to the writer. This man made correct predictions by 'intuition', but suffered physical, mental and spiritual oppression until he made a commitment to Christ.²⁰

We may also note two points made by Koch, the first being the fear which may develop from taking note of astrological predictions.²¹ The second point is seen in the case of a pastor who had detailed predictions made from his horoscope: they began to come true, until he repented and asked God's forgiveness and protection from demonic powers.²²

Often, the precise nature and degree of the demonic element, if any, in astrological prediction is not clear. But since astrology is condemned by God, it belongs to the kingdom of darkness and will lead to harmful results of various intensities. Part of the work of deceiving spirits (1 Tim. 4: 1) may be to give correct astrological (and other) predictions, or to make some of these predictions come true.

¹⁶ Dean, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 23sq.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁰ Ch. 7 of A. P. Stone, *Light on astrology* (Bombay: Jyoti Paperbacks, Gospel Literature Service, 1979).

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 95.

²² K. E. Koch, *Between Christ and Satan* (W. Germany: Evangelization Publishers; UK: Ambassadors for Christ International, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1968), p. 17.

Our conclusions may be summarized as follows:

- (i) Scientific studies of cosmic influences and correlations, as such, are not astrology.
- (ii) There is no test of 'astrology' (in our divinatory sense of the word), only of individual astrologers.
- (iii) Some astrologers do develop a predictive ability.
- (iv) The Bible condemns the use of astrology.

The final challenge brings us to the basic matter of power.

III The challenge of power: Should we try to develop our psychic abilities?

This question arises because some in the church are saying, softly perhaps, that we should.²³ We have to remember that while there seem to be some natural psychic occurrences (*e.g.* at the death of a distant loved one), psychic abilities also develop as a result of involvement in the occult, and may be a burden. Koch²⁴ mentions, among other things, the appearing of clairvoyance after magical charming.

It will be helpful to look at a few psychic-type events recorded in the Bible.

Samuel acted as a seer and could predict future events (1 Sa. 9: 6, 19f.; 10: 1-6). Elisha seemed to be clairvoyant (2 Ki. 6: 8-12). Ezekiel experienced out-of-the-body travel (Ezk. 8-11).

The New Testament also records short-range prophetic predictions (Acts 11: 27f.; 21: 10f.) as well as healings and exorcisms (*e.g.* Acts 19: 11f.).

The point about these examples is that they all happened by the power of God and not by occultism (*e.g.* Ezk. 8: 1, 3; Acts 19: 11). On the other hand, Satan can also produce 'signs and wonders', which, however, lead away from the truth (2 Thes. 2: 9f.; Mt. 24: 24).

It is possible for a sincere Christian to be misled into thinking that his or her occult powers are from God when they are in fact satanic. Koch²⁵ gives a salutary example of this.

The other aspect is that the occult does provide power. It is noteworthy that Hindu astrologers generally worship the planets for success in prediction and also for protection against ill effects following from their work.

Whatever powers there are, Christ is far above them (Eph. 1: 21). In the spiritual warfare the challenge to Christians is not that we should develop occult power, but that we should be channels of Christ's power. This means being available to do whatever he wishes us to do.

²³ Morton T. Kelsey, *The Christian and the supernatural* (London, 1977); Matthies, *The opening door* (Augsburg).

²⁴ Footnote 5, p. 186.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Christian Ministry in its Theological Context

Craig M. Watts

We welcome this first contribution from Craig Watts a scholar who is studying theology in the United States. He has completed his first degree and is pursuing a course leading to entry to the ministry.

The results of any attempt to conceive a theology of ministry apart from the central doctrines of the Christian faith will come forth still-born. Christian ministry can be adequately understood only in relation to the great themes of the faith. Perhaps one can speak of *ministry* in isolation from the doctrines of revelation, Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology, but the ministry of which one would be speaking could not be *Christian* ministry. The identity of ministry as Christian is preserved only when it is seen in the context of Christian theology as a whole. For this reason the minister dare not view the task of the theologian as peripheral to the activity of ministry.

This essay is an attempt to see ministry in its theological context. Because of the nature of the subject matter, many questions must remain unanswered, and some important issues must be left unaddressed. What is offered here is a broad—though hopefully suggestive—outline that is not so much a developed argument as it is an affirmation. It is an affirmation that Christian ministry is first and foremost the ministry of God in Christ, and as such is an outgrowth of God's will, rather than human need, of God's purpose, rather than human plans, of God's faithfulness, rather than human technique. This ministry is ours only because it was first God's and it remains Christian only in so far as it remains His.

1. The Revelational Presupposition

The ministry of the church is called into being and is guided by the revelatory Word of God. This indicates that revelation precedes the church both temporally and in terms of pre-eminence. It is the given data of faith with which the church must reckon. This revelation must never be equated with any aspect of the life of the church, nor with the experience of the Christian. Hence, by referring to revelation as the 'data of faith' we mean that faith 'lives by the power which is power before faith and without faith. It lives by the power which gives faith itself its object, and in virtue of this object its very

existence'.¹ Thus revelation can be present to the church only because it was first past. By faith we can now be recipients of the saving activity of God, and, indeed, we can participate in a mission of salvific significance. Yet these present experiences are not to be compared with or considered equal to the original revelatory acts of God, for it is upon these latter that the former are based and by which they are conditioned. Therefore, faith is a subsequent act which appropriates in the present the power and meaning of that which has taken place in the past. The present experience is dependent upon the past activity. Hence faith is relativized.²

It should be clear from what has been said thus far that when we speak of revelation as the Word of God what is meant is not man's word about God, but God's own Word as God lives and speaks it.³ There is a profoundly irreducible otherness about revelation. The Word of God is neither man's word about God, nor primarily God's Word about man, but most fundamentally God's Word about God. Revelation, then, is divine self-disclosure. The author of revelation is its contents.

The fact and form of revelation reflects a personal quality which is inseparable from the revelation itself. This is as it should be since the content of revelation is not a thing or an idea, but a person. To speak of revelation as God's Word suggests an intentionality which is appropriately attributed only to a person. The truth of revelation is the truth of God as a speaking person. What God speaks cannot be true abstracted from Himself for it is true through the fact that He Himself said it and is present in and with what He has said.⁴ This personalizing of the concept of revelation should not be seen as a mere anthropomorphism since God Himself chose to give us the fullest revelation of Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

This personal quality of revelation points to the fact that though revelation is characterized by an otherness, both in reference to its source and its content, nevertheless, in intention it encompasses

¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1 ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936), p. 154.

² Helmut Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith*, I, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 129.

³ Thomas F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 137.

⁴ Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

the human hearer. In fact, there can be a human hearer only because of the divinely directed Word, for though such hearing is a human impossibility, yet it is a divine possibility for human being. Thus, we can say that the hearing person is the object of the purpose of the speaking God, and, therefore, is included in the concept of revelation. Karl Barth has made some significant observations in regard to the purposiveness and intentionality of revelation as it relates to the hearer which are worthy of our attention.⁵ First, revelation is directed to us as a Word which could never arise from within ourselves. Every human word fails to be fully genuine and is incapable of entering into an irrevocable encounter. Encounter with the revelatory Word of God is an irrevocable encounter in which the Word can be neither compromised nor dissolved, nor can the encounter be diminished through union with the human subject. The Word of God always confronts us with something fresh which we have never heard before. 'The rock of a Thou which never becomes an I is thrown in our path.' This otherness of revelation is the mark of the Word of God which sets it apart from all other words, yet God makes it known to us and it is always distinguished from us.

Secondly, this revelatory Word that is directed to us is a Word which 'smites us in our existence' in a way that a human word is incapable of doing. This Word both questions and answers us at the most profound depths of our existence. In this it is like death, though death lacks the transcendence and vitality which is to be found in this Word. This Word comes from some point external to us and stands over us. It is the case that the revelatory Word of God applies to us as no other word can precisely because it is the Word of our Creator, who encompasses and preserves our existence from beginning to end.

Thirdly, the Word of God as both revelatory and creative Word comes to us of necessity in order that a renewal of our relationships with God occur. The fact that God comes as a speaking God, revealing himself in a totally new way, making the unknown in himself known, implies both a criticism of the present state of the relation between Him and us, and a declaration that He intends to re-establish and sustain the relation despite His criticism of its inadequacy and imperfection. This cannot be the content of a human word. Only the One who has instituted the relation has the right and power to confirm and renew it when it is disrupted.

Fourthly, the Word of God which is directed to us is the Word of reconciliation that speaks not only of a present reality, but also of a future in

which God promises Himself as the content of our future and as a presence which meets us as we move towards the end of all time. God announces Himself as the One who is coming for the fulfillment and consummation of the relation He established between us as creation and Himself as Creator. Words of such finality are not human words. These are words of promise and hope for a fulfillment which is beyond our imaginations and are based only on a promise that the speaker of this Word is the coming Other.

This revelation, this Word of profound otherness, this Word of disturbing and disrupting relevance, this Word of creation, reconciliation and hope is God's ministry to us which precedes any and every act of ministry or theological reflection on the part of the Church. This divine revelation evokes human response, calling a people into being. The people share something of an impression or image of that to which they respond; hence, their response is in keeping with and a reflection of the revelation. This being the case, theological activity must emerge out of ministry and cannot be isolated from it. Theological activity is both a result of and for the sake of ministry if it is to be consistent with the divine modality. Understood in this manner the revelatory ministry of God becomes the foundation and presupposition from which all subsequent insight into the nature and strategy of ministry must arise, and to which the Church must refer as a criteria of its own ministry. The nature and structure of Christian ministry is determined by God for the world, rather than by the world for the sake of the world. Therefore, one can say that 'we cannot contemplate the nature of God in His revelation without contemplating our own nature and purpose'.⁶

Only in relation to the revelation of God can the Church know itself, for its identity is not self-grounded. It is derived from that which calls it into existence. For both its existence and its identity the Church must refer to that which is other than itself. This is just as true in the case of the individual as it is in the case of the corporate body of the Church. A loss of identity occurs when the creature no longer looks to the revelation of God to answer the question, 'Who am I?'. Any attempt at self-definition independent of the creative and revelatory Word of God is an illegitimate and faithless manifestation of self-assertion in which there is an implicit rejection of the category of 'creature' as applied to one's self, and a demand to be a 'creator' in one's own right. Relative to this problem Helmut

⁶ Ray S. Anderson, 'A Theology for Ministry' in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, Ray S. Anderson, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 141ff.

Thielicke has insightfully remarked, "The 'I am' is a statement about being in relation, for in every dimension of life I am characterized by what God is for me. I am created, fallen, and visited. I am judged and blessed. The I is thus determined from without by what is done on it, by what God is for it. . . . When things are viewed thus, it is impossible to begin with a self-understanding or pre-understanding. For this would mean excluding the I from that relation and seeing it as a prior entity. Who I really am I learn only from the word that proclaims to me God's condescension, His covenant, and His mighty deeds."⁷

Rather than attempting to explicate further the relevance and ramifications of the doctrine of revelation for a theology of Christian ministry, perhaps it is best at this time to turn our attention to the form of revelation in Jesus Christ in order that we might move towards a clearer vision of the shape of ministry.

2. The Christological Form

Because divine revelation is the presupposition and source of Christian ministry, the contour and form of ministry is determined by the shape and mode of the revelation. It is in recognition of this that we speak of the Christological form of Christian ministry.

Revelation is not a thing which is neither God nor man. Rather it is God addressing humanity in such a way that the Word becomes flesh in a concrete and identifiable individual who in his particularity is inextricably identified with the revelation of God. In Christ that which is beyond and before human existence participates in it. The ground of creaturely existence comes as a creature to be both God for man and man for God, to be both the Word addressed to humanity and the obedience rendered to God in order to overcome the estrangement of humanity from God.

In Jesus Christ the revelation of God takes on a personal and verbal form. The verbal is not to be detached from the personal as occurred in Protestant scholasticism, since the revelation is the revelation of the infinite-personal God. Revelation is not simply a deposit of information which is detachable from the personal encounter with God. The verbalization of revelation is possible precisely because it is personal. Thus in Christ, God reveals Himself in Word and deed, as He interprets the meaning of His own activity. There is no personal revelation without the verbal dimension since the acts of God become revelation in their interpretation. In fact we can speak of the acts of God as

revelation only if we understand the verbalization or divinely given interpretation of these acts as an aspect of the act itself. In Christ, 'God's Word has become speech to men as man to man, for in Him God has graciously assumed our human speech into union with His own, effecting it as the human expression of the divine Word, and giving it as such an essential place in His revelation to man.'⁸

Revelation of God always involves divine accommodation to the limitations intrinsic to the human condition. The Word of God comes in human form as human words and acts—truly human, but never *merely* human. It comes in a way which is available to human comprehension, but that frustrates our expectations. The manner in which deity is expressed in the humanity of Jesus, and most especially in the cross, contradicts all our familiar ideas about God. Rather than revealing himself in the power and glory of a king, he comes in the powerlessness, humility and unsightliness of a servant to challenge, not only our conceptions of God, but our visions of ourselves as well. The revelation of God in Christ is the revelation of One who gives himself through self-limiting and self-emptying (*kenosis*). As Walter Kasper has observed, 'God evidently exercises such supreme power and freedom that he can as it were renounce everything without "losing face".'⁹ But this renunciation must be understood in positive, rather than negative terms, for it is not a renunciation of His fundamental nature; it is a renunciation of a negative self-existence which is contrary to the nature of divine existence. It is an affirmation of 'the dynamic dimension of love as activity'.¹⁰

God loves freely, and in freedom he loves absolutely. This is the central Christian confession concerning God. In creation God enters into relation with the world. Such a relation entails limitation on the part of God. However, the physical creation does not require a limitation of God to any significant degree, since He could, if He willed, completely control all aspects of this creation. But real limitation is required if God is to enter into relationships with another who has a

⁸ Torrance, *op. cit.*, p. 149. Also see Torrance, *Theological Science*, 'In theology this Logos is encountered as a Word to be heard, as Truth to be acknowledged, not just a rationality to be apprehended and interpreted, so that we have to learn how to distinguish the given *in its own self-interpretation* from the interpretative processes in which we engage in receiving and understanding it. This means that theological thinking is more like a listening than any other knowledge, a listening for and to a rational Word from beyond anything that we can tell to ourselves and distinct from our rational elaborations of it' (p. 30).

⁹ Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (London: Burns and Oates, 1976), p. 168.

¹⁰ Ray S. Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 179.

⁷ Thielicke, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

free, relatively autonomous existence of his own. If creation itself is to be creative and free, God must limit Himself. It is the creation of humanity with the capacity of freedom which requires a self-imposed limitation of God, lest the fragile, finite freedom be destroyed, and reciprocal relations rendered impossible. Hence, the creation of human being by the free act of divine love by its very nature is kenotic.

The personal quality of God's relation to the world is observed in the fact that the world does not stand in perfect relation to God. If the relation of God to the world was primarily based upon his omnipotence there would be no lack of perfection in the relation, but such a relation would be mechanical and finite freedom would be impossible. The alienation of creation from God could be resolved by God through an abolition of human freedom. But God seeks to establish a reconciliation which preserves freedom. Just as alienation is possible through human freedom, so also is the fulfillment of the divine purpose possible only if human freedom is retained. Thus the manner by which God seeks to fulfill this purpose must be responsive to the concrete and ever changing situation of the human race. Therefore, He perfectly relates the constant flux of reality to His overarching purpose. The diverse and changing actions of God reflect His perfect and unchanging love. In the words of Karl Barth, 'There is such a thing as a holy mutability of God. . . . His constancy consists in the fact that He is always the same in every change.'¹¹ God is absolutely relative yet absolutely faithful to His purpose. Hence, the absoluteness of God can accurately be defined as the unlimited capacity to respond to the changing concrete situations in a totally appropriate manner so as to perfectly relate them to His eternal purpose. We are likewise capable of relating changes in the world to our overarching goals, but we do this in a very limited way. It is God's unlimited capacity that sets Him above us in this regard.

The answer to the question of how God can accept the limitations of humanity while remaining divine can best be considered by viewing the self-emptying of God in the incarnation as a stratagem by which God expresses His salvific intention to humanity as a human Himself. In light of this several factors emerge.¹² First, the self-emptying of God in the incarnation is not entirely discontinuous with God's relation to creation as a whole. Divine life in relation is divine life in limitation.

Kenosis is present throughout the history of God's relation to humanity. However, the kenosis in Christ is the supreme demonstration of the kenotic love of God for humanity.

Second, in becoming incarnate, God has shown that humanity is not something alien to himself; it is not necessarily contrary to deity. To coin Barth's phrase, there is a 'humanity of God' in his manward movement. In the divine affirmation of human being and in His substitution for the race, God indicates that He need not exclude humanity in order to truly be God. Rather 'his deity encloses humanity in itself'.¹³ Finitude is not intrinsically in alienation from the divine. This idea has bearing on the concept of enhypostasis, as well as implications for the imago dei. Frank Weston has indicated awareness of this in his observation that 'the fundamental error of all who seek a human or divine-human subject of mankind lies in the false belief that the ego of manhood must, in some sense, be necessarily a man. . . . If man be God's image, may not the Son of God be presumed to possess, at least, all those characteristics that are essential to man's ego'.¹⁴

Third, kenosis is the supreme manifestation of divine absoluteness and the intentionality of God. This truth is enshrined in Gottfried Thomasius' formula: 'Self-limitation is self-determination.' Self-determination is an essential, if not the central aspect of personal life, and there can be no absolute self-determination if self-limitation is not a possibility. If self-limitation could not be included in the divine life, the will of God would be subservient to power. Divine self-limitation is itself an expression of divine power as it is controlled by the purpose of God. Hence, the self-limitation of God in Christ is the highest manifestation of the freedom of complete self-determination.

A church whose existence, identity and purpose is rooted in the revelation of God in Christ cannot believe that the way of kenosis was taken by the Son of God so that the Church could go another way—the way of individualism and self-interest.¹⁵ Christian ministry is the ministry of Christ as continued through the Church for the sake of the world. Therefore, we dare not limit the notion of self-emptying to a single vicarious act of one on behalf of the many. The 'law of kenosis' is intrinsic to the divine life and forms the ontic structure of the community into which persons are called in Christ;

¹¹ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas (Richmond: John Knox, 1960), pp. 50-51.

¹² Frank Weston, *The One Christ* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1914), pp. 107-108.

¹³ Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

¹¹ *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 496.

¹² Donald H. Dawe, *The Form of a Servant* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), pp. 195ff.

the kenotic way of life is the way of community.¹⁶ True community always entails self-emptying, for it can endure in no other way, and apart from community there is no Christian existence.

As Bonhoeffer described grace without works as 'cheap grace', we might aptly designate ministry without self-emptying as 'cheap ministry'. The kenotic way of life is threatening since it is contrary to self-interest, and at times even to personal safety. But this aspect of Christian ministry was certainly not unknown to the one who said, 'He who loses his life will find it.' The preservation of the identity of Christian ministry is possible only if the ministry of the Church is an embodiment and re-enactment of Him who, 'being found in human form humbled himself, and became obedient unto death' (Phil. 2: 8). This identity is lost if the Church seeks to preserve itself by asserting itself over against the world or through protective self-containment. 'It is most surely separate from the sinful world when it most fully embodies and humbly expresses the Servant-form of the incarnate Lord, and becomes the Servant suffering for the world, bearing in its body the dying of Christ for men, and thus demonstrating in action its willingness to make the world's suffering its own.'¹⁷

Christian ministry is ministry in word and deed. The Church both proclaims the great work of God in Christ and continues the ministry of Christ in the world through various forms of direct service. Christian ministry is never to be mistaken for mere humanitarian service since it is not simply grounded in human need, nor motivated by a notion of the intrinsic worth of human being. Rather it is the free service of those who have been freely served by Jesus Christ. It is the expression of thanks-giving that bears the image of Him to whom thanks is being given.

3. Ecclesial Context

By referring to the ecclesial context of Christian ministry we mean to indicate that ministry takes place, not as individuals go out from the Church into the world, but as the Church lives and acts out its calling in the world. Christian ministry is the ministry of a community, or to use a Biblical image, we can say that Christian ministry takes place in the body of Christ in which each member has a function which contributes to the whole. There is

an interdependency which forbids us to identify the activity of any individual with the ministry of the Church except insofar as it relates to the whole. Christian existence is never simply the relationship of the individual to God, nor is Christian ministry ever merely the service of the individual to the world. As W. A. Whitehouse has observed, 'To live in Christ by faith is to take one's place in the community of the Church. The discipleship of each individual, called to live in his neighbour by love, is caught up into a corporate service which has direction, scope, and shape of its own. It is in this fellowship of service that believers receive their high privilege, granted by grace, and secured only through the Holy Spirit, that God's own service to His world in the person of Jesus Christ should be mediated through their persons and their actual worldly service.'¹⁸

Since the existence, identity and purpose of the church is derived from the revelation of God, our ecclesiology must be Christologically determined, and therefore, a theology of the church in ministry must bear the image of Christ. This means that the Church must first and foremost be a community that is the servant for God and because it is for God it exists for the world. The stance of the Church for the world is conditioned by its primary commitment to God, therefore it cannot simply identify itself with the position of the world so as to conform to the world. Hence, there are times when the Church must stand against the world in order to be truly for the world. In all of this the Church is to remain the servant of the world, 'the kenotic community' (Anderson).¹⁹

The Church is not in the world and for the world by any power, right, or dignity of its own. Because it shares a creaturely nature with the world we might ask whether there is any basis to the claim that the Church exists for the world in any special way that the world does not exist for itself. To this we must answer that it can be for the world in a unique manner only because it is not 'of the world',

¹⁸ 'Christological Understanding' in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. Ray S. Anderson, p. 221.

¹⁹ The ecclesiology developed herein primarily is along the lines of the model that Avery Dulles would label 'The Church as Servant,' though it is clearly distinguishable from the secular form that he criticizes. See chapter six of his *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974). The servant ecclesiology need not be defined in such a way that it excludes the other models that he discusses. For example, I see no reason why the servant model should be set over against the notion of the Church as Herald. In view of the concept of revelation outlined above it should be evident that these ecclesiological models belong together. Also see G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church*, trans. J. E. Davison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, pp. 410ff.) on presence and proclamation.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

¹⁷ *Report on Christ and the Church* ('Faith and Order Papers,' No. 38; Geneva: WCC, 1963), p. 24. Quoted in 'Christ's Ministry Through His Whole Church and Its Ministers' in *Theological Foundations For Ministry*, ed. Ray Anderson, p. 436.

just as the One whose life it shares and who sends it forth into the world is Himself not 'of the world' (Jn. 17: 11, 16). Its life and ministry is derived from Him who precedes it into the world. As the community that follows Christ the Church can do no other than go into the world as a servant for the sake of the world.

Several aspects of this relationship can be observed.²⁰ First, it is in and through the community of Jesus Christ that persons can know the world. The world's self-knowledge is defective because without the knowledge of God and His covenant the world does not know its origin, its condition or its goal. It knows neither the depths of its damnation nor the heights of its salvation. The Church is given to the world to know the world as it is and to be the point where the world can come to know itself. The Church could not truly minister to the world without its knowledge of the world, a knowledge that can come only from the revelatory and redemptive act of God accomplished in Christ. This knowledge is of both judgment and promise. It calls into question the possibilities, goals, and achievements of the world. It unveils the corruption, guilt, and false meanings in human existence. On the other hand, it affirms the world as God's good creation, as the object of His love, and the recipient of His grace. The Church knows the world as the world can never know itself because the Church knows God and is known by Him.

Second, the Church is the community that stands in solidarity with the world. Yet it maintains this solidarity without slipping into conformity. Conformity occurs only when the Church's presence in the world loses its 'not of' quality, at which point it no longer retains its distinctive ability to be truly for the world. If, on the other hand, the Church attempts to avoid conformity by shunning solidarity with the world the Church inadvertently shuns the love of God who for love sent His Son into the world. Solidarity with the world entails full commitment to it and full participation in it. Certainly there are times when the Church must contradict or oppose the ways of the world in order to be for the world but the value and meaning of such actions cannot be perceived except where there is deep commitment to the whole of humanity. To quote once more from Karl Barth:

The solidarity of the community with the world consists quite simply in the active recognition that it, too, since Jesus Christ is the Saviour of

the world, can exist in worldly fashion, not unwillingly nor with bad conscience, but willingly and with good conscience. It consists in the recognition that its members also bear in themselves and in some way actualize all human possibilities. Hence it does not consist in a cunning masquerade, but rather in an unmasking in which it makes itself known to others as akin to them, rejoicing with them that do rejoice and weeping with them that weep (Rom. 12: 15), not confirming and strengthening them in evil nor betraying and surrendering them for its own good, but confessing for its own good, and thereby contending against the evil of others, by accepting the fact that it must be honestly and unreservedly among them and with them, on the same level and footing, in the same boat and within the same limits as any or all of them. How can it boast of and rejoice in the Saviour of the world and men, or how can it win them—to use another Pauline expression—to know Him and to believe in Him, if it is not prepared first to be human and worldly like them and with them?²¹

Third, as the community of Jesus Christ the Church is under obligation to the world. Knowledge of and solidarity with the world is insufficient. The Lord of the Church is the Lord of the world. As such he suffered with and for it. While the Church cannot assume responsibility for the creation and redemption of the world, it is called to co-operate with God in His work within the limits of its ability. Faith in One who came in the form of a servant can never be an inactive or neutral faith in relation to those for whom Christ died. Because the Church is to be faithful to God it must be responsive to the suffering and lack of the world. While the world is not the object of the Church as God is, 'the Church lives and defines itself in action vis-a-vis the world'.²² For the Church to exist in itself and for itself alone is to conform to the world and to betray Him who called the Church into being.

The relations of the Church and the world are infinitely variable, but through it all is the realization that the Church is servant only because it was first served. The creative call and the radical imperative that the Church be emptied in service, to be the kenotic community comes from the kenotic Christ. The fact that Christ the Servant is Christ the Sacrifice should lead us to question to what extent our painless acts of 'service' deserve to

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 774-775.

²² H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), p. 26.

²⁰ For the following see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3, pp. 769ff.

be designated 'Christian ministry'. If it is in fact the case that 'the hermeneutical task of the Church is to continue to search out and seek to be conformed to the hermeneutical structure of revelation itself',²³ then it seems fitting that we recover the Biblical image of ministry as a 'living sacrifice' (Rom. 12: 1).

It is difficult to see how it is possible for the Church to fully participate in the ministry of Christ if the element of suffering is deliberately diminished. The sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of the Church as it follows Him in ministry are intimately connected with the suffering of the created order. The ministry of Christ is radical service for the sake of an extreme situation. W. A. Whitehouse has written, 'What is scandalous about the teaching and example of Jesus is the suggestion, embodied in His choice of model, that those who follow Him must spend themselves in direct personal service to

²³ Anderson, 'A Theology for Ministry,' p. 19.

any who call upon them, without calculation and without any safeguards of dignity. Their true dignity will emerge precisely in so doing, but it will not commend itself as such to those wise in the ways of this world.'²⁴ While this is certainly true, it seems that most scandalous aspect of Jesus' ministry is exhibited in the radical obedience which leads to the cross. A Christologically determined theology of ministry would do well to be guided by these words from the epistle to the Philippians: 'Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross' (2: 5-8).

²⁴ Whitehouse, p. 217.