

## 1340 COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Week 1 A: INTRODUCTION:

#### 1. WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

Greek *theos* = God. *logos* = thought, word.

Anselm: "Faith seeking understanding"

- A. Faith - committed cf religious studies, seminary cf. university.
- B. Seeking - not complete, exhaustive. (God infinite etc) To deny this is to deny the eschatological dimension.
- C. Understanding - use of reason cf. mysticism, fideism (self contained, untestable), authoritarianism. Results should be rational and communicable.

#### THE PLACE OF THE CHURCH.

- A. Church as a "school" (of faith). – disciple a “learner”, emphasis in Western tradition, e.g. John Knox, of Geneva as most excellent “school of Christ”.
- B. Concern and context of the Church. Cf. individualism, e.g. Barth "Church Dogmatics" not "Christian Dogmatics". Focus is on the community of faith.
- C. R.C. - study of the truth of revelation as defined by the Church, i.e. R.C. Church.

#### THE CENTRALITY OF REVELATION.

" the investigation of the Church's word about God with the intent of testing and achieving its purity and faithfulness as the responsive transmission of God's word in changing languages, vocabularies, and intellectual and cultural contexts"

( Bromiley p.xxvi)

- A. Foundation - God's word received
- B. Transmission - proclamation of the Church.
- C. Testing and Purifying - work of theology.

"From God to reality, not from reality to God, goes the path of theology" (Bonhoeffer)

These elements distinguish theology from philosophy or the general realm of religious ideas. Starting point (epistemology) is crucial. This approach is in conscious opposition to various empirical and existential methodologies.

N.B. All Christians are theologians, either good or bad ones.

Theology as reflection on what it means to believe in Jesus Christ.

Goal, conformity to the life of Christ.

## 2. WHAT IS HISTORICAL THEOLOGY?

### A Biblical Theology.

Attempts to establish with accuracy the Word of God to which the Church's word must respond.

- I. Books eg. theology of Genesis
- II. Authors eg. Paul's doctrine of justification.
- III. Themes eg. biblical theology of covenant.

### B Systematic or Dogmatic Theology.

Systematic theology: (English) attempts to systematise the sum of the propositions contained in scripture as the total revelation of God to man.

Dogmatic Theology: (European/Older) attempts to examine and present coherently and systematically all major Christian doctrines.

(No assumption of propositional revelation)

Involves an attempt to express the word of the Church in a manner faithful to the Word of God and to the needs of contemporaries.

### C Historical Theology.

Not a detailed history of Christian ideas, but doing theology in its historical dimension.

Fills in the gap between the time of God's Word and the present time.

- I. Witnesses to the continuity of "catholic truth" through the ages. i.e. whole, universal, inclusive.
- II. Provides examples of faithfulness and compromise to the Word of God.
- III. Accumulates insights, hints and warnings for the Church today..

### D Divisions in Historical Theology.

#### I. Chronological

Patristics (Church Fathers)	c. 100 - 600	bishops
Medieval	c. 600 - 1500	monks
Reformation and Response	c. 1500 - 1800	university
Modern theology	c. 1800 →	"

NB enormous mass of material available - eg first to twelfth century  
382 vols (Migne).

#### II. Method

- (a). Danger of a controlling principle used to distort the selection and evaluation of material eg. the moral values of Jesus (19<sup>th</sup> Century Liberal theology)

(A von Harnack)

law versus gospel (Lutheranism e.g. A Nygren)

Vincentian canon "believed everywhere, always and by all"

(b). the truth is in Jesus –

As Jesus' incarnation is not timeless nor relative but historical, so must theology be. This implies respect for a real space – time cultural context (confessionalism?) and does not allow for an absolute outside Christ, the proper subject matter of theology.

"In dogmas there speaks the Church of the past - venerable, worthy of respect, authoritative, .. as befits her - but the Church ... The Word of God is above dogma as the heavens are above the earth." (Barth)

3. A DANGER.

Theologismus - doctrine in the place of faith.

"By living, yes, dying and being damned is the theologian made - not by thinking, reading or

speculating" (Luther)

In prayer, thinking in God's presence, inward and outward theology is formed.

A theologian is "one whose prayer is true" (Evagrius Ponticus).

## **COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY**

### **WEEK 1 B REFORMATION THEOLOGY**

1. PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION
  - c. 1517 Luther's 95 theses to c.1618-19 Synod of Dort.
2. KEY FIGURES
  - A. Martin Luther 1483 - 1546 German Lutheran Theology
  - B. Ulrich Zwingli 1484 - 1531 Swiss Reformed
  - C. John Calvin 1509 - 1564 Reformed
    - A.B.C. = magisterial Reformers, alliance between Church and State.
  - D. Menno Simons 1496 - 1561 Dutch Anabaptist theology.
3. FACTORS LEADING TO THE BREAKDOWN OF THE UNITY OF THE WESTERN CHURCH
  - A. Nationalism - birth of modern state.
  - B. Temporal sword of Emperor and spiritual sword of Pope. This form of civil religion was breaking down, e.g. Henry VIII.
  - C. Corruption of the Late Medieval Church - immorality, simony, indulgences ("As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs" Johannes Tetzel), absenteeism, pluralism, ecclesiastical taxation.
  - D. Renaissance humanism - rise of the middle class, "back to the sources"(Erasmus,- Donation of Constantine – gift of primacy over other ancient sees, judge of clergy, actual date 8-9<sup>th</sup> century Frankish Empire.etc).
4. THE THEOLOGY OF MARTIN LUTHER.
  - A. The Protestant Principle (the defining element of Protestantism):
    - i. Scripture alone. (*sola Scriptura*)
      - (a) recovery of the centrality of the Bible as the primary source of authority cf. ecclesiastical tradition
      - (b) use of grammatical, historical exegesis, "plain sense" cf. allegorical interpretation
      - (c) scripture its own interpreter, throughout it one finds Christ: "cradle in which Christ lies"; "whatever preaches Christ would be apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate and Herod were doing it" (Hermeneutic principle).
      - (d) primacy of the Bible rather than the sacraments as the means by which God does his work. ( These along with preaching, are also ways in which the Word of God [Jesus] comes to us)

- (e) The gospel was central to the scriptures. Focus on Romans, Galatians, Ephesians because they were pure gospel and pointed to Christ. James emphasises works over faith, therefore it was a "right strawy epistle", similarly he expressed doubts over Revelation (millennialism).
  - (f) Tendency to to set the Old Testament against the New in terms of law and gospel (dualism). Primary value of the O.T. are the prophecies about Christ.
  - (g) Versus the "enthusiasts" (Anabaptists) and the magisterium (R.C.), revelation of the Spirit does not go beyond the external Word of the Scripture and sacraments.
- ii. Justification by grace alone through faith alone.
1. The background to Luther's doctrine.
    - (a) Luther had seen himself before God (*coram Deo*) whose righteous anger (righteousness of God) was justly expressed towards him a sinner.
    - (b) Faith and humility were preconditions, works assisted by grace, part of a covenant / contract (*pactum*) which had to be met for justification.
    - (c) This built on Augustine's confusion between justification and sanctification viz. 'made righteous'.
    - (d) Semi – Pelagianism of the via Moderna (Biel). impacted Luther. Late medieval theology, especially the via moderna of Gabriel Biel (c.1420 – 1495), taught Luther to try to love God above all else in the strength of his own unaided power. Works of contrition, penance, indulgences, masses and humility were virtuous works to be valued.
    - (e) Late medieval spirituality (via Bernard of Clairvaux 1090 – 1153) emphasised self-examination as a means of recognising one's empirical distance from the realisation of the image of God. This leads to the humility, which before the love and compassion of Jesus, as in the Song of Songs, produces fruit. In this free and thankful self-surrender one yields to love. This spirituality taught Luther to value suffering as God's way of making him penitent.
    - (f) Thus a dialectic was set up in Luther's experience. His theology told him that concepts like iusitia dei and poenitentia were means to receive merited grace, his spirituality told him that a standard of holiness that would accrue merit was unachievable. Caught between a spirituality and a soteriology that were incompatible, Luther was driven to despair. Luther's dilemma: how can I freely love a God who condemns me if I can't be accepted by God unless I love him freely.
    - (g) Revelation of the meaning of Romans 1:17 "There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith ... the passive righteousness with which a merciful God justifies us by faith ... 'Here

I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise through open gates'."

2. Justification:

1. Forensic ie. legal
2. Not to be identified with regeneration or sanctification.
3. Content is an imputed status of an alien righteousness cf. mother hen's wings covering chick.
- 4.4. Foundation is Christ's merits.
5. Faith is the (instrumental) means – a grasping faith which unites us to Christ by means of God's promises. Faith alone (*sola fide*) - the God given response to what God has done in Christ. Not justification **because of** faith but justification **through** faith on account of Christ.
- 6.6. A "wonderful exchange" – my sin for Christ's righteousness.
7. Simul iustus et peccator. (At the same time (extrinsically) righteous and (intrinsically) a sinner.

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- (iii) grace alone (*sola gratia*). Works of the law are an obstacle to justification (self - reliance). God accepts a man freely through Christ, and then accepts his works (done in faith, on account of Christ), not the other way around. The word bestows what it signifies, i.e. grace, righteousness etc.

The central theme of the Reformation sparked by Luther - affirmed in slogans such as *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solus Christus* - was the graciousness of God. It was for this reason that Luther designated the doctrine of justification by faith: "the article by which the church stands or falls" N.B. ecclesiology is subordinated to soteriology.

B. The Theology of the Cross

(i) Rejection of the *theologia gloriae*

This works by inductive reasoning from visible works of creation to invisible God behind them; this operates with a priori assumptions of what revelation should be like, e.g. power, majesty, glory.

The rejection of the soteriology of the *via moderna*, means an abandonment of its theological method.

(ii) Luther's opposition to rationalism

Anti – rationalist, reason a "whore". Scholastic use of Aristotle perverts the gospel.

(iii) Framework for his soteriology is the *theologia crucis* ("theology of the cross")

"the theology of the cross alone is our theology." God is not to be found except in sufferings and the cross.

1. Contrary to the false theology behind the power, prestige and wealth of the papal Church, manifested so clearly in one issue of indulgences, there is a

continuity between God's action in history in Christ and in the present, in revelation and salvation.

2. His *theologia crucis* stresses a conformity to God's action in Christ. Jesus is made passive before God, then is raised. The sinner must be passive and powerless, condemned like Jesus was, before he/she can be saved. "The sign and the thing signified are out of joint. What seems to be valuable (human piety, wisdom, philosophy) are in fact worthless, and what seems to be weak and negligible (the experience of the suffering, temptation, awareness of sin and failure) are in fact God's precious work to humble and then save the sinner." (G. Tomlin).
3. The *theologia crucis* means that when God reveals himself, God does so under an appearance that contradicts the revealed truth.
4. When God begins to show mercy, God does so by first revealing wrath (in the law); when God makes alive, God does so by slaying. The same contradictions apply especially to those who have already come to faith. God promises to protect the church, and yet it is persecuted by the world; God promises the forgiveness of sins, yet our conscience feels nothing but sin and wrath; God's promises life, yet we see nothing but death.
5. In the context of *theologia crucis*, faith means believing with certainty that God's Word is true even when the world, the whole heart of the believer, and even God himself contradicted the truth that is revealed in the Word, particularly the Word of promise.
6. Faith, therefore, is the art of believing the Word while experiencing, seeing, and feeling the opposite. We believe that Christ is the Son of God, even though we see an abandoned man on the cross; we believe that God cares for the church, even though we see nothing but a church persecuted by the world and apparently abandoned by God; we believe in eternal life, even though we see and feel nothing but death.
7. The primary locus of the theology of the cross is the experience of trial or tribulation, when the very heart and conscience of the believer sense that God's promise of grace and forgiveness is a lie. The believer must regard the promise of forgiveness as true and certain even though the conscience testifies the contrary. "But under the cross which we experience, eternal life lies hidden... We, too, experience the cross, and death appears to us, if not in fact, yet in our conscience through Satan. Death and sin appear, but I announce life and faith, but in hope. Therefore, if you want to be saved, you must battle against your feelings. Hope means to expect life in the midst of death, and righteousness in the midst of sins."

### C. Other Issues.

#### i. The Bondage of the Will:

Total dependence upon God's grace and predestination.

Versus Erasmus, moral impotence of man's fallen will, like a "beast of burden" ridden either by God or the devil. (Also denies psychological freedom; the human will has neither voluntary nor arbitrary freedom)

#### ii. The Sacraments:

~~a~~.a. Reduced from 7 to 2.

~~b~~.b. Baptism communicates grace through the Word, produces faith. Die and rise with Christ by sign and signification. We pledge mortification, God pledges non imputation of sin (forgiveness). Baptismal faith is in God's covenant to destroy sin.

~~e~~.c. Lord's Supper. Real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper "in, with, and under" the elements. Denial of transsubstantiation on one side (R.C.) and Zwingli's rejection of ubiquitarianism (omnipresence of the human nature of Jesus) on the other. Denial of sacrifice of the mass.

#### iii. The Church:

~~a~~.a. The fellowship of saints as it appears in the sight of God. Visible / invisible distinction (Augustine).

~~b~~.b. Created by the Word.

~~e~~.c. Priesthood of all believers. N.B. not individual priests.

~~d~~.d. Did not deny many good things present under the papacy (even if Pope is the Antichrist). True believers (faith) exist inside the visible structure.

### 5. THE RADICAL REFORMATION

A. Opposition to the Reformers' commitment to a Christian state and therefore a state Church.

B. Diverse in theology and practice, e.g. soul sleep, unitarianism, Th. Muntzer – prophetic inspiration, violence, rebellion. The Church should consist only of freely committed believers. Therefore as unscriptural and papal infant baptism is invalid, "rebaptisers". N.B. effusion. Simons: inner baptism of washing from sin through faith must precede an outer baptism. Baptism a sign of obedience cf. faith, as God's work in us cf. Christ's work for us.

C. The Church and state to be separate in terms of the use of law. Civil magistrates have the right only to punish wickedness. In the Church the only weapon to be used is excommunication, the "ban" preserves the pure Church.

D. Jesus Christ prohibits the use of violence, so Christians must be pacifists and cannot exercise civil authority.

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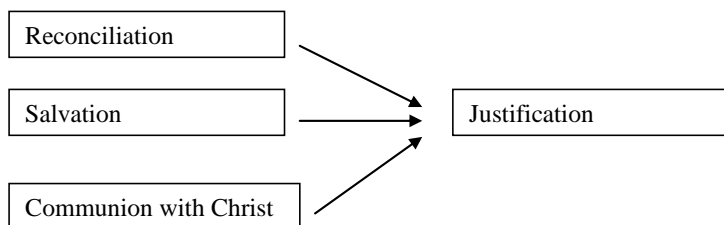
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- E. It is wrong for Christians to swear oaths.
- F. The breaking of bread is a fellowship meal in remembrance of Jesus Christ.  
(Mennonites, Hutterians, Bruderhof, Church of the Brethren etc.)

6. IS JUSTIFICATION AN ABIDING CENTRE FOR THEOLOGY?

- A. There is one dominant model and others are subsidiary, contributing to it. E.g.



Justification is the critical methodological tool by which any aspect of theology is to be judged. It is the affirmation of the grace of God in Christ *par excellence*

- B. “Man of today no longer asks: How do I get a gracious God? He asks a much more radical and elementary question, he asks for God as such: Where are you, God? He no longer suffers under the wrath of God, but under the impression of God’s absence; he no longer suffers under his sin, but under the meaninglessness of his existence; he no longer asks for the gracious God, but whether God really exists.”

(Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation 1964).

Cited in D.A. Carson (ed), 1992, Right with God, Paternoster/ Baker.

- C. “Hence the peculiar urgency of the problem of justification. It has its root in this problem of the right of God in His grace as addressed again and this time truly to sinful man. Therefore it brings us face to face with the whole, that is to say, the knowledge of God himself. Of all superficial catchwords of our age, surely one of the most superficial is that, whereas 16<sup>th</sup> century man was occupied with the grace of God, modern man is much more radically concerned about God Himself and as such. As though there were such a thing as God Himself and as such, or any point in seeking him! As though grace were a quality of God which we could set aside while we leisurely ask concerning his existence. As though the Christian community and Christian faith had any interest in the existence or non-existence of this God Himself as such! As though 16<sup>th</sup> century man with his concern of the grace of God and the right of his grace were not asking about God himself and His existence with a radicalness compared with which the questioning of modern man is empty frivolity! As though which seems to be lacking to modern man – and all the Christian Churches are very much to blame – were not that he has not learned to ask concerning God with this reality compared with which is no other; that he asks concerning the existence of God without what he is maintaining, or denies it without knowing what he is denying; that his asking and answering is necessarily frivolous because it is irrelevant! Obviously we cannot even begin to discuss with him until

the discussion is lifted on to quite other ground by the proclamation of the church, i.e., until the subject is put before him which alone gives any sense to the question about God – the one and only God who is gracious to man and who in His grace is in right, faithful to Himself and in harmony with Himself.” K. Barth, C.D. IV/I, 530.

D. How to settle this Issue?

- (i) Do we go from the world of human experience to the biblical text, or vice versa.
- (ii) Is justification a particularly Pauline emphasis? cf. John etc.
- (iii) Does Paul himself have another centre eg. R.P. Martin suggests reconciliation.
- (iv) Perhaps justification has a certain epistemic priority. This would be true if
  - a. God deals first with the conscience of a sinner.
  - b. The justification of a believer corresponds (is a participation) the resurrection of Jesus (see 1104, 1205 notes). This is the focal point of the *kerygma* in Acts.
- (v) Reformed theology puts its stress on the glory of God rather than the rescue of humanity. This means an applied interest to all spheres of life eg. politics.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 2 A: CALVIN AND CALVINISM

JOHN CALVIN (1509 - 1564)

1. Widely considered the most brilliant mind of the Reformation and its greatest systematiser. cf. Luther's work is a way in response to situations of crisis.

*Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536-1559). Not just a systematic theology but a "sum of piety" reflecting pastoral concerns. A theological source book to be used in conjunction with the bible and his commentaries. (More on biblical theology). Became the standard text of Reformed "missionaries" in Europe.

2. The Centre of Calvin's Theology.

Unlike Luther whose main concern was soteriology (salvation) Calvin emphasised the nature of God. Attempts have been made to find the heart of his theology in the doctrine of predestination, the providence of God or the sovereignty of God; he has also been called "the theologian of the Holy Spirit", e.g. his doctrine of the Lord's Supper which side-stepped the Luther-Zwingli debate. The shape of the *Institutes* follows the order of the Apostles' Creed. Calvin's chief concern is the glory of God: "it is not very sound theology to confine a man's thoughts too much to himself, and not to set before him as the prime motive of his existence zeal to show forth the glory of God, for we are born first of all for God and not for ourselves ... It certainly is the duty of a Christian man to ascend higher than merely to seek and secure the salvation of his own soul"

The whole matrix of Calvin's theology should be read in this light. Calvin's starting point is not the wrath of God, nor Scripture (later Protestantism) but the experience of the grace of God. (See extra note following).

3. The influence of Calvin.

Most influential theologian of the Reformation. The term "Reformed Theology" distinguishes Calvinism and its churches from the Lutheran and Anabaptist tradition.

Presbyterian Church (John Knox)

Calvin Reformed Churches. (Swiss, French, Dutch etc)

Puritans (English theologians dissatisfied with the extent of the Reformation in Britain, also North American counterparts).

4. Calvin and Calvinism.

In the 17th Century Protestant thought became highly detailed and organised. This was the era of "Protestant orthodoxy" or "Protestant scholasticism". eg Synod of Dort (1618-19), Westminster Confession (1646). In this period theology seems to have rigidified and a great deal of the spirit of Calvin is lost.

## A. Predestination.

Calvin's views of predestination drew heavily on Augustine and were largely compatible with those of Luther. Although he taught double predestination (election, reprobation) he did not speculate beyond the teachings of scripture concerning the order of the divine decrees. (Supralapsarianism: the divine decree of predestination precedes of creation. Cf. Polanus 'whomever Christ drives from himself.'  
Infralapsarianism: the divine decree of predestination occurs after the creation and fall of humanity. NB. this is a logical not chronological order.) The doctrine of predestination became closely identified with the doctrine of God (rather than with salvation) and developed as the touchstone of Calvinist orthodoxy. Whereas in the Institutes predestination serves as a corrective against taking credit from one's salvation, (soteriology), in Reformed Orthodoxy predestination falls between Trinity and creation. N.B. how this works in Barth. (see later)

Calvin could describe Christ as the mirror of election, so that if we wanted to know if we were elect we should look no further than him (*Institutes* 3.24.5). Again, John Knox (c.1514-72) in the Scots Confession (1556) refers to election when asking why Christ had to have two natures, and when he discusses election he points to the union of deity and humanity in Christ.

Arminius (1560-1609) cast the doctrine of election along christocentric lines. Christ was the foundation of election, God was seen to elect on the basis of the work of Christ. From this time on Reformed theologians barely mentioned the role of Christ in election.

## B. Limited Atonement.

As predestination became understood in terms of predetermination it followed logically that Christ did not die for all, but only the elect. There was no sense in which God willed the salvation of all people.

Despite certain ambiguity, it is now widely recognised that Calvin did not teach a restricted atonement.

## 5. The Five Points of Calvinism

Synod of Dort (1619) versus Arminianism.

Enns p.480

Some comments:

T(otal Depravity) - Not absolute depravity, but every part of a person is affected by the fall so that they can make no move towards God without his grace. Rejection of God as good entails bondage of will. A fallen person does not live freely, for, as a free agent, they are bound to the choices they have made for freedom? (O. O'Donovan).

U(nconditional Election) - We choose God because he first chose us. The fundamental point at issue between Arminianism and the Augustinian / Calvinist tradition.

L(imited Atonement) - A doctrine held only by (some) Reformed theologians. Atonement as sufficient, not efficient. (See Appendix)

I(rresistibility of Divine Grace) - Grace does not totally destroy the will (already unable) but rehabilitates it in such a way to evoke a willing response. The sinner finds it irresistible in the same way that a young man may find a girl's charms "irresistible"

P(erseverance of the Saints) - Apart from the grace of God the converted would fall away. God preserves them by his grace in making them faithful to the end.

### **Appendix 1: The Structure of Calvin's Institutes**

(Doyle, R.C. 1999: 19, *Eschatology and the shape of Christian belief*. Carlisle: Paternoster.)

### **Appendix 2: The Reformed Doctrine of a Limited Atonement**

1. Sometimes referred to as definite or limited atonement.
2. Set in contrast to:
  - a. pure universalism – Christ died to save all without exception. (This is rejected on the grounds that not all will be saved in the End.)
  - b. Arminian - universalism Christ died to provide salvation for all without exception, but not to save anyone in particular, only those who believe of their own free will. (This is rejected on the ground that if Christ took the punishment for *all* sin then he also took the punishment for the sin of unbelief. Unbelief then can not be a

hindrance to salvation any more than other sins.) n.b. If Jesus only paid for *some* of the sins of all then no one can be saved.

- c. Calvinistic universalism - Christ died to provide salvation for all without exception, but it is only applied to the elect on the condition of faith (because faith is not included in the purchase of Christ for it is divinely bestowed, according to God's sovereign will at conversion).
- d. Calvinistic particularism – Christ died a substitutionary death only for the elect who are saved *through* the means of faith.

(Long, G.D. 1976: 109, *Particular atonement*. n.p. Presbyterian and Reformed.)

The strength of the Reformed view of the particular atonement is its logic. Its weakness is that it does not seem to be supported by the biblical text. Furthermore, it raises questions about the symmetry between Adam and Jesus as federal or representative persons. It seems to imply that the first Adam is a more inclusive person than the second.

Calvinistic universalism as described above suffers from the weakness of separating the sovereign will of God at conversion from the work of Christ.

No one view seems satisfactory.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 2 B. ARMINIAN THEOLOGY

ARMINIUS (1560 - 1609)

Enns, pp 491,495

1. Context: Strict Calvinism of the Netherlands e.g Gomar, supralapsarianism. God decreed the election of some and the reprobation of others, and then decreed to permit the Fall as the manner in which that election and reprobation would take place.

Arminius objected that such views made God the author of sin and the human person an automaton.

2. Remonstrance (1610): Doctrinal statement drawn up in opposition to the prevailing Calvinism (Remonstrants). Answered by the Synod of Dort.
- 3.

#### THE ORDER OF SALVATION

ISSUE	CALVINIST POSITION	ARMINIAN POSITION
ORIGINAL SIN	total depravity and guilt inherited from Adam	weakness inherited from Adam
HUMAN WILL	in bondage to sin	free to do spiritual good
GRACE OF GOD	common grace given to all; saving grace given to elect	enabling grace given to all, saving grace given to those who believe; persevering grace given to those who obey
PREDESTINATION	rooted in God's decrees	rooted in God's fore-knowledge
REGENERATION	monergistic	synergistic
ATONEMENT	Christ's death a substitutionary penal sacrifice	Christ's death a sacrifice that God benevolently accepted in place of a penalty

EXTENT OF ATONEMENT	intended only for the elect	intended for all
APPLICATION OF ATONEMENT	by power of the Holy Spirit according to the will of God	by power of the Holy Spirit in response to the will of the sinner
ORDO SALUTIS	election, predestination, union in Christ, calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, sanctification, glorification	calling, faith, repentance, regeneration, justification, perseverance, glorification
PERSEVERANCE	perseverance of all the elect by the grace of God	perseverance dependent on obedience

#### 4. The influence of Arminian Teaching.

European Arminians

Arminius      English "Latitudinarians"

John Wesley → Methodism and non-Calvinist  
Evangelicalism

#### 5. Some General Issues:

- (a) What is central in this theology - humanity or God?
- (b) Are the concepts biblical or philosophical?
  - sovereignty – determinism
  - corporate – individual
  - grace vs law,
  - divine vs human
  - responsibility - free will
  - voluntary vs arbitrary.
- (c) Is freedom a univocal concept when applied to God and the creature. "If a person had this possibility he would not be a creature but stand on his own." (Ridderbos)
- (d) A trinitarian theological anthropology will see freedom existing in relationship only, not preceding it.



## 5. Historical Summary

Pelagianism: Humans have full say - God negligible

Arminianism: Humans have final say - God active but limited.

Humans are able and responsible.

Calvin: God has full say - Humans unable and responsible.

Calvinism: God has full say - Humans unable and not responsible.

## 6. Election and Christ

“Faith foreseen makes human faith the source of light, while predestination as foreknowledge renders God the mirror of faith, rather than faith the mirror of God. Flesh lights the way of God, rather than letting God in Christ light it, and we use God to reflect ourselves, rather than letting Christ in us reflect God. Thus, apart from Christ they mistake the mirror of election for its light.” (E.F. Rogers, in S.J.T. 50,2, 1997,p.145).

## 7. Arminianism and Atonement

- (a) Seventeenth century Arminians taught that God accepted Christ’s death as a substitute for the penalty for sin which humanity deserved. The doctrine of penal substitution was held to lead to either universalism or limited atonement.
- (b) The decisive point of atonement therefore becomes the point of time when a person repents and believes.
- (c) Faith is not a gift of God but a co – working with God for salvation.
- (d) The difficulty with the above view, in some ways abandoned by later Arminians, is that it moves the centre away from the work of Christ to human appropriation. Additionally, if Jesus did not die for our actual sins, but was merely a means for God to forgive us, it is impossible for the conscience to come to a place of rest about our personal guilt.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 3. A: ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY BEFORE VATICAN II (1962 - 1965)

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Catholicism of the Middle Ages was marked by a strong internal division. On the one hand there was much vital theological activity and outbursts of deep spirituality (Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, St Francis, Thomas a Kempis), on the other hand the organised Church was frequently racked by various types of immorality and the populace of Western Europe by ignorance and superstition. Earlier attempts to reform the church from within by well - intentioned Popes, General Councils and Catholic scholarship had failed. The success of the Protestant Reformation made it necessary to call an ecumenical council to deal with two issues - the definition of R.C. doctrine in opposition to Protestantism and the introduction of disciplinary reforms within the R.C. Church.

N.B. 'Ecumenical' from oikoumene (Gk) = whole inhabited world.' Ecumenical councils are convened by the Pope and decreed to be infallible. (21 in all for Roman Catholicism, 7 for Eastern Orthodoxy.)

#### 2. THE COUNCIL OF TRENT. (1545 - 1563)

##### A. Scripture and Tradition.

In response to the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura* the Council placed the authority of tradition on a par with Scripture: "the traditions, whether they relate to faith or morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and having been preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession." Apostolic truth resided in the Church, so there were two sources of revelation.

The Latin Vulgate, with its additions to the Hebrew Bible (apocrypha), was decreed the standard for reading and teaching.

No one should interpret scripture: "contrary to that sense which Holy Mother church, to whom it belongs to judge of their true sense and interpretation, has held and upholds." No book was to be published without the approval of ecclesiastical authorities viz: *imprimatur*.

##### B. Original Sin and Baptism.

This is the foreword to the central article on justification.

Condemnation of Anabaptist rejection of infant baptism and those who deny that by baptism the guilt of original sin as loss of sanctifying grace is not remitted, "or says that the whole of that which belongs to the essence of sin is not taken away, but ... only cancelled or not imputed". The baptised are made "innocent, immaculate, pure, guiltless" and all that remains in them is "an inclination to sin".

N.B. Sin as disease or pollution.

This was an essential preface to the teaching on justification, as the possibility of the impartation of righteousness depends on the prior removal of original sin.

### C. Justification.

Sixteen chapters and thirty-three anathemas specifically against the central Lutheran and Reformed doctrines of justification and predestination.

The final arrangement of the decree reflects the three *status iustificationis* which emerged during the proceedings on justification. The first nine chapters discuss the “first justification”, in which the initial transition from a state of sin to righteousness is described. This is followed by four chapters on “second justification” – how a person, once justified, may increase in righteousness. The final three chapters deal with the “third state”, indicating how someone may forfeit their justification, and subsequently regain it through penance, and clarifying the manner in which this differs from the “first state”.

I Neither the law (Jew) nor human nature (Gentile) can bring justification.

II This is why Christ came.

III Those to whom the merits of Christ are communicated may be justified.

IV To be translated from their wretched state of children of Adam to the blessed state of adopted children of God through the second Adam.

V Justification begins with prevenient grace, apart from merits; free will must then accept or reject the salvation that is offered in it.

VI Adults prepare themselves for justification by faith, hope and love. (Lane pp 173 ff.) N.B. Faith is assent to revealed truth, viz ‘the faith’, of which the Church is guardian and interpreter.

VII Justification:

"Is not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and the renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby an unjust man becomes just". Sanctifying grace imparts a new habit or disposition (versus imputation). "Not only are we reputed just but we are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us". (By infusion)

"For faith, unless hope and love be added to it, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of his body". (Versus solâ fide.)

VIII When Paul talks of justification by grace through faith only what he means is that the beginning of justification takes place by faith and not by merits.

IX One may be justified without knowing it, for one can never be certain he has received grace. (This opposes Protestant “presumption”, but in practice leads to self-awareness of the means of grace).

X As an objective reality, justification can be increased by good works. (Justification can increase, so justification is prospective and future, as well as present. There are clear connections between the The Tridentine concept of second justification and the Reformed concept of sanctification. Whereas in the first justification, grace operates on a person, in the second, the person cooperates with grace.)

XI As objective justice in living, justification requires as a necessity good works. (Cf. *simul justus et peccator* )

- XII One cannot know one's predestination, and therefore should not presume on it. (Not a denial of active predestination, knowledge).
- XIII Likewise, those prone to trust in the gift of perseverance should commit themselves to good works in fear and trembling.  
(Versus Calvinism).
- XIV Sinning after baptism one needs to recover through the sacrament of penance the grace which has been lost. (This can be done on account of the merit of Christ.) This remits eternal punishment, but the temporal punishment is remitted through "fasts, alms, prayers and other devout exercises of the spiritual life." e.g. indulgences. If one dies "insolvent" without having paid off this debt, he goes to purgatory until the pains pay off the debt.
- XV Mortal sin causes the loss of sanctifying grace, but not of faith (assent), except in the case of religious infidelity. Those in mortal sin will not be saved. (This involves, with full knowledge and consent of will, deliberate rejection of God as humanity's last end, and turning to the creature as the source of satisfaction. These die without the desire to confess).
- XVI The believer (not pre - conversion works for salvation) receives eternal salvation: "both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Jesus Christ, and as a reward promised by God himself, to be faithfully given for their good works and merits". The justified, through their good works, can fully satisfy the divine law, and thus merit eternal life as a reward.

A distinction needs to be observed between:

- a. Merit of congruity - co-operation with grace in preparation for justification.
- b. Merit of worthiness – that which is due the justified because of their moral acts performed in a state of grace.
- c. Works of supererogation – works which exceed the strict requirement of God's law. This makes possible a Treasury of merit (saints), Indulgences etc.

All of this depends upon the infusion of grace, so that good works do not have the nature of sin in them. In such a state of grace there is merit.

#### COMMENTS

1. The model is a form of essentialism, i.e. thinks in terms of substance.
2. The model is a form of perfectionism. Works have 'a power of satisfying God for sin' (R. Hooker). Sin is purged rather than pardoned.
3. The above confuses Christ's work for us and Christ's work in us.
4. The method is analytic and subjective – dominated by our sense of our own condition.

#### D. The sacrament of the altar.

##### (1) Transubstantiation:

- a. Christ stated that under the appearance of the bread he offered his body.
- b. For this reason the church has always taught "that through the consecration of the bread and the wine there comes about a conversion of the whole substance of the bread (and the wine) into the substance of the body (and the blood) of our Lord".
- c. This conversion is: conveniently and properly called "transubstantiation".
- d. In virtue of it, the faithful may offer the sacrament: "the full worship of adoration" which is due to God.

#### COMMENTS.

1. Depends upon the distinction made in Aristotle between substance and accidents. (Trent uses substance and appearance).
2. Set in opposition to Protestant 'subjectivising of sacraments'. Ex opere operato (by the deed done), rather than Ex opere operatis (by the deed of the doer). The locus of the action of grace in the sacrament is administration by the priest and not reception by faith.

##### (2) The Eucharistic Sacrifice

- a. The same Christ is offered in this bloodless sacrifice as he who: "on the altar of the cross once offered himself with the shedding of blood".
- b. The sacrifice is therefore truly propitiatory.
- c. To profit from it we will come with true hearts, right faith, fear and reverence.
- d. God, propitiated by it, will grant grace, penitence and remission.
- e. The fruits of the primary oblation (the cross) are perceived most fully through the bloodless oblation.
- f. It is offered for the sins, penitences, satisfactions and other necessities of both the faithful living and also the faithful dead in purgatory whose purification is not yet complete.

#### COMMENTS

1. Partaking of the mass is seen as virtually necessary for salvation.
2. Although the sacrifice of the mass is understood as an application of Calvary, it effectively denies the "once for all" nature of Christ's finished work (Heb 7:27; 9:26).
3. This view of the eucharist is coherent with the transformational character of salvation in Roman Catholicism.

E. Other doctrinal issues.

Other sacraments, purgatory, relics, etc - the general consensus of the medieval church was affirmed.

F. Discipline.

In matters of morality and spiritual care the council took the route of strict reformation. Simony, absenteeism, pluralism, violation of celibacy vows etc would no longer be tolerated.

G. Importance.

Trent became the normative statement of anti-Protestant Counter Reformation Roman Catholicism. All earlier councils were read in its light. It became **the** council of the R.C. church. Through it the papacy returned to power and prestige. It marked the beginning of the modern R.C. Church and 400 years of "Tridentine Catholicism."

3. VATICANI (1870)

Historic Roman Catholicism placed the visible church at the centre of God's purposes on earth. (The Church places us in Christ, rather than the reverse).

Fourth Lateran Council (1215) "There is one universal church of the faithful, outside which no one will be saved".

Pope Pius IX (1854) "It is to be held on a matter of faith that no one can be saved outside the Apostolic Roman Church. It is the only ark of salvation and anyone who does not enter it must sink in the flood"

Central to this view of the Church is the place of the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome or "Pope" (*papa* - father). The Pope is the vicar (representative) of Christ on earth, in organic connection with the office of Peter, with the "power of the keys". The dogma of Papal infallibility established in the midst of the controversies of the nineteenth century is to be understood in this context. The Pope cannot promulgate new revelation, only clarify the deposit of the faith:

"The Roman pontiff, when he speaks *Ex Cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of his office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, he defines, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, is endowed by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, with that infallibility with which our divine redeemer willed that the Church would be furnished in defining doctrine of faith or morals; and, therefore, that such definitions of the Roman pontiff are irreformable of themselves and not in virtue of the consent of the church"

The latter refers especially to the college of bishops. An example of such a decree is *Humanae Vitae* (1968) with its ruling on artificial contraception.

Examples: Immaculate Conception (1854) – Mary conceived free from original sin, by the same operation of prevenient grace as in baptism.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1950) – this is a corollary of her sinlessness.

EXTRA NOTE: NATURE GRACE DUALISM IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

1. Two story view of reality.

2. Super – Nature
1. Nature

Nature: what humans share with the natural world. E.g. a body.

Super – nature: unique to humans as in the likeness of God, e.g. reason and freedom.

2. Distinction between ‘image’ and ‘likeness’.

Latter relates to a *donum superadditum*, it is this which is lost in the fall. That is, loss of special supernatural gifts, e.g. subjection of reason to God and body to soul.

3. Grace as a “super – naturalizing “ entity. A *tertium quid*, a sort of quasi-physical force which restores the soul to level 2.

4. Sacraments infuse grace (*gratia infusa*). At baptism, and through the mass, human abilities are supernaturalised. “Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.” (Aquinas).

5. This dualism permeates to the whole theological and ecclesiastical apparatus.

The Roman Catholic Church view is related to the understanding of itself. Here it is important to note that the Church of Rome sees itself as one *interlocked reality, which is comprised of a divine, and a human element. De Ecclesia*, 8). This conviction shows up in most doctrines. A second centre is established alongside the real centre. I.e. Christ.

The Sacrifice of Christ

Holy Scripture

Christ

God

The grace of God

Christ

The Mass.

Tradition & the infallible teaching office of the church.

Apostle Peter (Pope) and the Infallible church

The creature

Co-operation of the creature through anticipatory grace.

Mary



Barth asks: "Which is the real centre now? Where is the decisive authority?" (Barth, 1964. 112).

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 3. B: COVENANT THEOLOGY

1. The biblical notion of covenant, as a binding agreement between God and man became the organising centre and standard of orthodoxy for Reformed theology in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was first advocated by Zwingli (1525) to justify both the practice of infant baptism and the use of military force. The covenant approach emphasised the unity of the whole Bible, in contrast to the discontinuity introduced between the Old and New Testaments introduced by the Anabaptists.
2. Various expressions of covenantal theology exist in the Reformed tradition up to the present. (Sometimes expressed as "federal theology", from the Latin *foedus*).  
eg J.H. Bullinger (1504 - 1575), J. Wollebius (1586 - 1629), W. Ames (1576 - 1632), J. Owen (1616 - 1683), Westminster Confession (1647), J. Cocceius (1603 - 1669), J. Edwards (1703 - 1758), C. Hodge (1797 - 1878), B.B. Warfield (1851 - 1921), L. Berkhof (1874 - 1957).
3. The Covenant of Works.
  - i. Made between God and Adam before the Fall. An Edenic or 'natural' covenant made with Adam as a child of nature. His conscience is informed of covenantal conditions by the light of nature.
  - ii. The promise of eternal life for obedience and the threat of death for disobedience.  
(Genesis 2:17). In this probationary period the means of grace are the sacraments of paradise and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
  - iii. Adam is the federal head of humanity, (all included in him). God ordains a connection between Adam and the race. When Adam breaks the contract with God, judgement is imputed to the race legally and effectively.
  - iv. The covenant of works has been fulfilled through the obedience of Christ.
4. The Covenant of Redemption.
  - i. Made between the Father and Son in eternity. A 'supernatural' and eternal covenant, *pactum salutis*.
  - ii. The promise of eternal salvation to the elect on the basis of the agreement of the Son to fulfill the covenant of works. (Incarnation and Atonement). If the Son as the second Adam becomes human and dies for the elect, then God will be gracious.
  - iii. Jesus as the federal head (Mediator) of a new humanity (viz. the elect).
  - iv. Christ fulfils all conditions necessary for procuring the salvation of his people.  
N.B. Trinitarian pattern: Father gives a people to the Son from eternity, promises to them the gift of the Spirit, in order they may live in fellowship with God.

## 5. The Covenant of Grace.

- i. Made between God and the elect after the Fall. This is proclaimed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament.
- ii. The promise of salvation to the elect on the condition of repentance of sin and faith in the substitutionary death of Christ. In this case condition and gift are one.
- iii. The content of the covenant has always been the same: "I will be your God" but it has been administered differently in the time of the law and the time of the gospel.

The covenant of grace is essentially one:

- Promised in Eden (Gen. 3:15).
- Signified to Noah (Gen. 6:9).
- Promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff etc).
- Sinai covenant trains Israel until the coming of the Messiah (Gal. 3:17-18).

## 6. Comment.

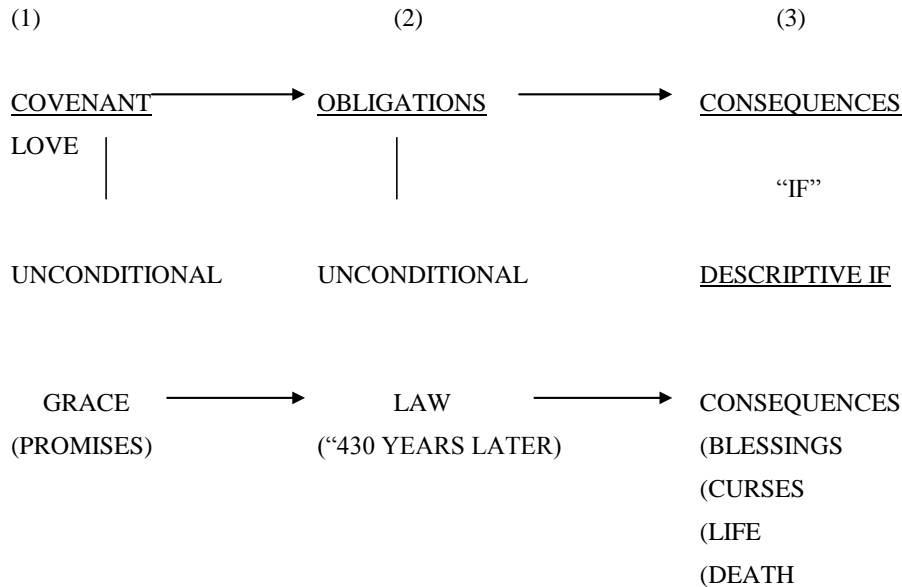
- i. The theological centre has moved from Christ to covenant.  
Cf. Calvin - scripture as "spectacles" through which we see Christ.  
Federal theologians tend to read Bible chronologically, neglect the priority of Christ in both creation and redemption.  
N.B. Paul's argument in Colossians 1 'by him', for him, pre-eminent in 'all things'.
- ii. The concept of covenant is taken back into the Godhead. This is not biblical and is anthropomorphic. The Holy Spirit tends to be excluded, so that the communion dimension of covenant is overlooked.
- iii. The concept of covenant is confused with that of contract. Covenant is thought of as a pact, a conditional, mutual and bilateral agreement. E.g. God will be gracious to elect if Christ...; if people repent God will graciously forgive. Concepts of law are confused with the reality of (free, unconditioned and unconditional) grace. (See diagrams over.)  
God is conditioned into forgiving by the obedience of Jesus – this is legal rather than relational.
- iv. The doctrine of God changes.  
e.g. Theodore Beza - supralapsarian, God freely loves the elect and justly hates the reprobate.  
Jonathan Edwards - God's essential (primary) attribute is justice, he must be just but his love is arbitrary, i.e. God must will to love.
- v. Focus shifts from what God has done in Christ (salvation history) to what we do in fulfilling our part. The *ordo salutis* (logical order of salvation in the life of the individual) takes priority. Pietism, the concentration on personal experience, results. Reformed theology, contrary to Calvin, produces problems in the area of assurance. One cannot simply look to Christ, e.g. *sylogismus practicus*. (Deduction of the reality of election from signs of a holy life.)
- vi. Danger of 'legal' cf. 'evangelical' repentance, i.e. repentance precedes mercy, (Rom. 2:4). "Forgiveness is logically prior to repentance." (Augustine, James Torrance).

vii. Deep-seated dualism e.g. justice/holiness-love, nature-grace, elect-reprobate, world-Church, for Christ is no longer seen as the mediatorial head of all creation.

viii. God's primary purpose becomes legal rather than filial.

Similarities between the doctrine of God in high Calvinism and Roman Catholicism can be traced back to common roots in the Roman philosophy of law (Cicero) and Greek philosophy (Plato, Aristotle).

**THE GRAMMAR OF LOVE (GRACE)**



**THE GRAMMAR OF CONTRACT**

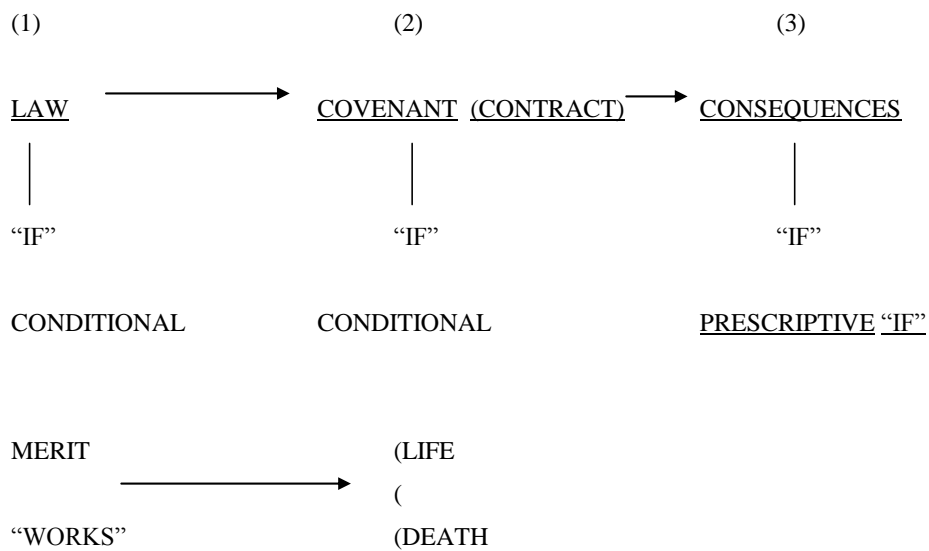
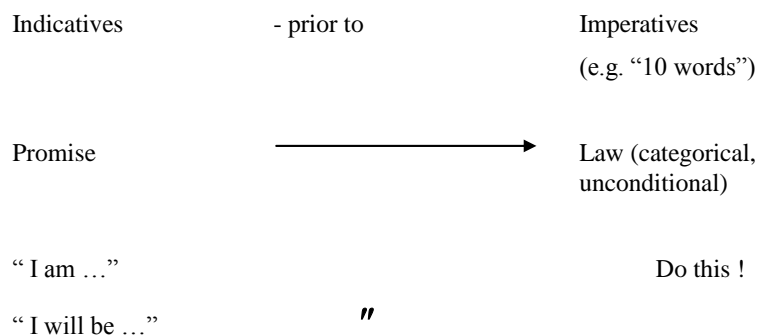
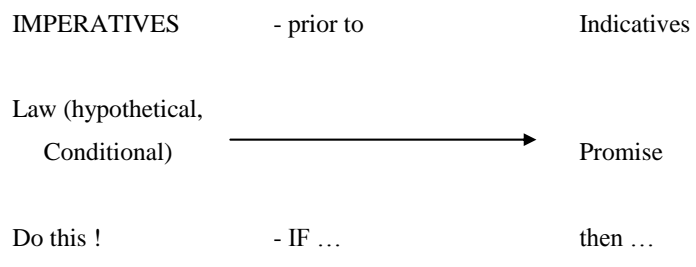


DIAGRAM 1:                      FOEDUS                      COVENANT OR CONTRACT?

*COVENANT (FOEDUS)*



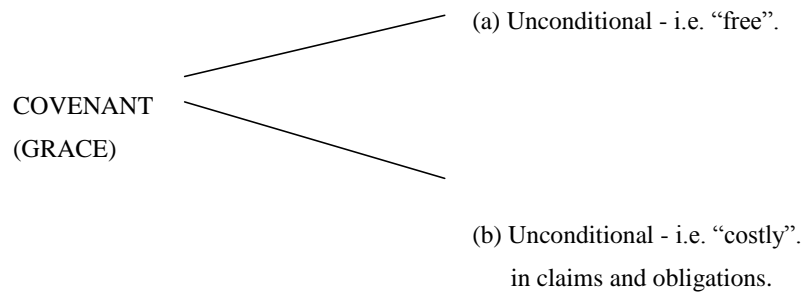
*CONTRACT (FOEDUS)*



- i.e. (a) Law not annual promises  
 "Is law against promises? God forbid!" (Paul in *Gal 3:21*).
- (b) Covenant - strengthens law  
 Contract - weakens law. (Rom 3:31)  
 (legalism)

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**DIAGRAM 2:**



## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 4.A. ANGLICAN THEOLOGY

#### 1. THE CHARACTER OF THE ANGLICAN REFORMATION:

- A. Sought to return to Scripture without abandoning useful elements in the inherited historical structures. The Reformation is not a new beginning but a renewal. Appeal is made both to Scripture and the continuous tradition of church life. This was seen as affirming that the Church of England was not a new foundation nor a local realisation of the invisible church, but the expression in England of the one historical and continuous visible church of God. There is no separate Anglican identity as such.
- B. Lacked an outstanding theologian - Hugh Latimer <sup>+</sup> (1485 - 1555), John Hooper<sup>+</sup>(1495 - 1555), Nicholas Ridley <sup>+</sup>(1503 - 1555), John Jewel (1522 - 1571 ) etc. (+ = martyr)
- C. Thomas Cranmer <sup>+</sup>(1489 - 1556)  
Appointed Archbishop of Canterbury by Henry V111. Liturgical genius - Book of Common Prayer 1549, 1552. Cranmer's policy: "Reformed Catholicism." A new spirit but not a new system.  
(N.B. the most important Prayer Book is 1662.)

#### 2. THE 39 ARTICLES. (1604):

- Neither vague nor narrow nor precise. Function as "boundary markers".
- Reply to current controversies. (Not a complete theological system.) Applies only to clergy.
- Via media* - middle way between the errors of R.C and Anabaptism.
- Doctrine of God - traditional. Doctrine of Church - Reformed, but non - presbyterian.
- Doctrine of Salvation - moderate Calvinism eg single predestination Doctrine of State - Reformed.

#### 3. RICHARD HOOKER (1553 - 1600).

Main apologist for Anglicanism, first lengthy justification of the Church of England.

- A. Context - Elizabethan Settlement. Moderate Anglicans versus Puritans eg. Presbyterianism, use of surplice, wedding rings. Puritans sought to forbid that which was not in scripture, on the principle that what God required would be in the Bible. This led to a uniformity of obligation. They sought to complete the Reformation in England.
- B. Hooker opposed Puritan insistence that the Bible was a complete guide to all of life and no ceremonies should be added which are not found in Scripture. Bible not a mechanical code book of rules, it does not set out everything, it is a book of salvation. Hence development of application is possible. Cf. *Adiaphora*: matters of indifference to be settled by the national church.
- C. Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. N.B. not a systematic theology.  
Hooker develops a broad theological structure on which to base his defence of the details of the ecclesiastical establishment.

## 1. The nature of authority

The argument depends upon the scholastic (Thomist) synthesis of reason and revelation.

God speaks in a number of ways "3 legged stool" . Scripture, tradition, reason. (With the Book of Common Prayer, this tends to be a distinguishing feature of the theological method of Anglicanism.)

Church laws can be defended on grounds other than scripture, which is not a complete blueprint of church life. They can be defended on the ground of reason and tradition. These are to be tested against Scripture, what does not *contradict* is to be retained.

"laws human must be made according to the general laws of nature, and without contradiction unto any positive law in scripture."

"the judgement of antiquity and the long continued practice of the whole church – from which unnecessarily to swerve, experience has never found to be safe... That which is new, if it promise not much, fears condemnation before trial -till trial, no man acquits or tries it, what good soever it pretend and promise. So that in this kind there are few things known to be good, till such time they are grow to be ancient."

The Church can develop its government and administration in response to circumstances.

All three authorities an expression of rational law What is absolute and fundamental is natural law, truths of reality.

Eternal law of God's being, natural laws of creation and reason govern the universe, divine law revealed in Scripture, laws of Church and State.

Harmony deriving from origin in God, universal and hierarchical rational order. The rational nature of hierarchy, law and tradition provides the rational basis for the necessity of obedience to the established order. The harmony of revelation and reason supports the integral harmony of church and state, as coextensive aspects of the one Christian society.

All this explains how the Church of England can be Reformed and Catholic (cf. Article XXXIV).

## 2. Hooker vs. Puritans on the Church.

1. Visible church vs. invisible church
2. Whole society vs. gathered congregation
3. Communion with bishop vs. communion with presbytery
4. Centre distinguished from edges vs. homogeneous

e.g. Puritans placed the *form* of the church in the centre with the trinity and the deity of Christ. Hooker placed the *church* in the centre with these other doctrines.

(Both move away from a Christological definition of church to a social definition, e.g. teaching, sacraments, discipline, prayer. This makes the question of church polity (order) a priority.)



## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 4 B: ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The term is a self – designation for the beliefs of those Churches in communion with one another and acknowledging the honorary primacy of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul). Also termed “Eastern Orthodox.”

Historically the “Orthodox Church” developed from the Church of the Eastern or Greek speaking part of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire. The dominant culture and intellectual influence is therefore that of Greece. It traces its history back to the apostles and Jesus and sees itself continuing into the present spiritual life, worship, faith, doctrines and moral teachings of the Catholic (patristic) church of the first eight centuries.

It bases its faith and practices on the seven ecumenical (world-wide) councils. (RC – 21 councils).

- (1) Nicea I – 325 (Arianism – Jesus not God).
- (2) Constantinople I – 381 (Appollinarianism – Jesus has no soul / mind)
- (3) Ephesus – 431 (Nestorianism – denies full union of natures).
- (4) Chalcedon – 451 (Eutychianism – divine absorbs human nature, i.e. monophysitism).
- (5) Constantinople II – 553 (Attempt to reconcile monophysites – enhypostasia).
- (6) Constantinople III – 680 (Monothelism – dythelitism; 1 theandric operation).
- (7) Nicea II – 787 (Iconoclasm – Icons are holy pictures of Jesus, Mary and the Saints).

The orthodox churches were mutually separated from the Western Catholic Church by the “Great Schism” of 1054. The *filioque* (“and the Son”) clause in the Nicene Creed was critical. Attempts at reconciliation failed due to the Roman insistence on papal authority.

#### 2. DOCTRINE IN ORTHODOXY.

Eastern Orthodoxy theology is self-consciously doxological - it is to be done in the context of a worshipping community. The task of doctrine is to lead to right worship. There are three classes of doctrinal definition:

- a. Dogma – matters which have a direct bearing on worship. Dogmas safeguard the Trinitarian vision of God and the truth of the incarnation, these are enshrined in the Nicene Creed and dogmatic definitions of the Ecumenical Councils.
- b. Theologoumena – statements made by venerated teachers of the Church, e.g. constitution of the Church, nature of man, of sin and grace and the ways of salvation, veneration of Mary.
- c. Theological opinions – diverse attitudes allowed, e.g. status of Western Christians.

### 3. THEOLOGICAL METHOD.

Tries to avoid rationalistic propositionalism and vague pietistic anti-intellectualism. Emphasises the unknowability of God's essence. Theologians tend to be holy men, mystic and ascetics. Stresses a negative (apophatic) theological method. E.g. John of Damascus (c.675 – 749), *The Orthodox Faith*, God is transcendent, utterly different from creatures, known in communication beyond sense or reason (concept).

God is not any of the things he is called, but known in the stripping away of all intellectual and sense impressions. 'Dogma is to be observed in silence' (Basil). This involves an apophatic method, or 'negative theology'. Consciousness of intellectual failure is an essential element in Christian theology. The intra-trinitarian life, rather than the history of Jesus, is doxological. For example, the Spirit is worshipped 'with' the Father and the Son, where 'with' does not denote what it ordinarily means, but signifies the ineffable communion of persons in the trinity. God's economic relations involve a work of the will, while the trinitarian being of God belongs to his transcendent nature.

In 'pure prayer', there exists a communion beyond words or images, here one is conscious of God alone, beyond all created things. Revelation raises the minds to realities beyond understanding, beyond oikonomia (economy) to *theologia*, *theologia* moves toward *theoria* (contemplation) and vision, its purpose is not to give knowledge of concepts. To speak of God in himself (the consubstantial trinity) outside the cosmological links of the economy, requires an apophatic emptying of all the attributes of God manifested in creation. What remains beyond such negativity is the notion of absolute hypostatic difference and of the equally absolute essential identity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Revelation occurs in the *economy* of salvation. Doctrine therefore, arises out of, rather than being identified with, union.

What is denied, is an external view of authority, as in the papacy and propositionalism of the Western Church. The vision of God is internal.

### 4. DOCTRINE OF GOD

Central to all Eastern theology. The dogma of the trinity is the arch of all theological thought (*theologia*). Strongly Trinitarian. The Father is source (*arche*) of unity in the Trinity.

The Son is eternally begotten of the Father.

The Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father.

If the Spirit proceeded from the Son he could not be distinguished from the Father. Whereas Western theology has emphasised the essence of God as one, Eastern thought has stressed the reality of the persons. The relations between the persons of the trinity are not the bases of their diversity (West) but express that diversity (East). The latter discusses the trinity liturgically/doxologically, whereas the West has treated the trinity in isolation from the life of the Church. For Eastern theology the economy of God is salvific, for Western thought it reveals the essence of God. In Orthodox thought the nature or reason for the diversity of the persons is ineffaceable and recognised apophatically. Western theology seeks to explain the diversity positively by referring to

origin and relations in God. What is known in revelation is the radiance or glory of the Father through the Son in the Spirit. This is the uncreated “energy” of God.

Great stress is placed on the incarnation as the means by which the unknowable God is known. The dogma is laid down in the Ecumenical Creeds.

#### 5. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

As the trinity is a unity so is the Church. The Eastern Orthodox Church is the one true Church of Christ on earth. This Church is visible, and schism within the Church is impossible. The Church is governed locally by bishops who together form a college of equals, cf. Trinity. There are councils at various levels, up to Ecumenical. Parishes have presbyter and deacons. Authority is diffused. It cannot lie in a single source, whether the Bible or the pope.

#### 6. SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION.

Scripture is the supreme revelation of God to humanity. Both literalistic, inerrantist and humanistic approaches to the Bible are rejected. The Holy Spirit who inspired the authors of Scripture opens the minds of church members, living in communion with God to an understanding of the Word of God. The result is tradition with an emphasis on continuity. Recognises the L.X.X. and the Apocrypha. As long as the Holy Spirit is at work within the Church revelation is an open possibility. (The canon was not settled for Orthodoxy until 692 A.D.). The various Ecumenical Councils and various other statements fall into the category of infallible doctrine. Divine power protects the Church, as guardian of the truth, from error. This position is incompatible with *sola scriptura*. Tradition is the spiritual context for Scripture.

#### 7. DOCTRINE OF HUMANITY.

Genesis is interpreted symbolically. The Western doctrine of the Fall is rejected. Adam failed to respond to his calling to be fully united with God. The potential for full communion with God was lost through sin; the image of God is distorted or weakened but not lost. An exercise of self determining freedom (*autexousion*) remains with respect to both sin and goodness. The possibility of a return to God remains:

- a. God’s love for humanity remains as powerful as ever.
- b. Human beings did not originate sin, but were deceived by the devil.
- c. The divine image extends to human flesh, which unlike (simple) spirit is reversible.

The re-creation of humanity is actualised in the incarnation of the divine Logos, the Second Adam. The chasm of fallen nature is bridged by incarnation, of sin by crucifixion and of death by resurrection. The ascension unites heaven and earth as one.

While all this is objectively offered to us by God the Son, it is realised only in the Holy Spirit. Grace and freedom are to be expressed concurrently in the cooperation of the divine and human wills. This is expressly a synergistic position.

#### 8. THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The power of the Spirit is fully exercised in the church. He applies what has been accomplished in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who divinises us, he is a divine

bond drawing together the mystical body of Christ and her Lord. The re-creative power of the Spirit is divine grace.

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## 8.9. SALVATION AND THE SACRAMENTS.

Salvation is understood in terms of *theosis* or deification. Theosis or divinization has at least 3 interrelated meanings. It is the mystical union with God whereby believers are transformed and take on the shape of God; the movement from death, mortality, and the corruption to life, immortality and incorruption; and the ascent from the image of God (possessed by all people) to his very likeness (given to those who cooperate with divine transforming grace).

The goal of every Christian is ontological renewal, that the personal life which is realised in God should also be realised on the level of human existence. Key texts are Psalms 82:6 and 2 Peter 1:4 'if the word became man, it is so that man may become gods.' (Irenaeus). "Because of his great love (Jesus Christ) was made into what we are, so that we might become what he is." (Irenaeus). "He became man so that we might become divine." (Athanasius). Men are made gods by grace, not by being united to God's essence, which is inaccessible, and mysterious (1 Tim. 6:16). Participation is not in the nature or substance of God, but in his personal existence. Union is with God's "energies", his condescending grace viz. His action and self disclosure in the world (St. Symeon, Gregory Palamas.) In the Church as the body of Christ the divine nature permeates the being of humans like leaven permeates bread, in order to restore it to its original condition as *imago Dei*. Here there is transformation without absorption.

Through the preaching of the good news and the sacraments, the spiritual reality is imparted to the believer through the Holy Spirit so that one is remade in the image of God and Christ so re-entering communion with him. The sanctifying and deifying energy is imparted in the holy service of the church. Seven sacraments are recognised: \*baptism, chrismation, \*eucharist, \*penance, matrimony, orders, unction.

This requires the full cooperation of our free will. Each individual must wholeheartedly reject the evil passions of the world and say yes to God. Such requires careful attention to the heart as the source of desire and the mind and thoughts of the soul. Zeal keeps the grace of the Spirit active. Good works do not constitute merit, but are essential for participation in the divine nature.

## 10. ICONS

The iconostasis (picture stand) in the church represents heaven as well as earth. By the principle of Incarnation, icons image the redemption of the whole creation and the transfiguration of the cosmos. Icons are 'Bibles of the poor, worship is expressed through them. Icons are not idols because they represent glorified or incorruptible flesh. (As such they are not portraits). Grace can be present in the icon because it represents deification. Church buildings are symbolic, the altars represent heaven, and the nave signifies earth.

## COMMENTS.

### 1. Apophaticism:

- a. Biblical support for the ineffability of God (Jn. 1:18, Job 11:7-8; Rom 11:33-36; Isa 6:2; 55:8-9; 1Cor 1:18-31; 3:18-23).
- b. This is demanded by human finiteness and fallenness, (Rom 1:18,28; Eph 4:17-18; 1Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2-3).
- c. This is a helpful corrective to proud rationalization and de-mystification.
- d. Relates God as Subject of personal relationship to God as object of intellectual study.

### 2. Icons:

- a. Correction to Protestant iconoclasm; overemphasis on the written word and aversion to materiality.
- b. Orthodox need to recognise the use of icons as an adiaphoron.
- c. Icons cannot be given the same status as the Bible, and are open to misuse.

### 3. Scripture and tradition:

- a. Place of tradition in Orthodoxy explicable in terms of history of heretical use of scripture .
- b. Extra – canonical sources (Fathers, creeds, councils) should not be romanticized.
- c. Emphasis on the responsibility of the whole Church as protector of the truth is valuable.
- d. Important recognition of the pneumatic and internal authority of the Holy Spirit.

### 4. Salvation

- a. Central place given to a theological anthropology honours the image of God and the incarnation .
- b. Human cooperation with the grace of God is a biblical theme, (1 Cor 15: 10-11; 2 Cor 6:1; Phil 2:12-13; James 2:14-26). This guards against antinomian tendencies resulting from distorting juridical understanding of salvation.
- c. Grace is a power or energy God gives a believer (1 Cor 12; 15:10; 2 Cor 12:9)

### 5. Theological Criticism:

- a. Under emphasis on power of sin and personal responsibility.
- b. Distinction between image and likeness of God is unbiblical.
- c. Confusion between salvation and sanctification. This can lead to frustration at one's imperfect desires for union with God.
- d. Focus on certain contrasts in Orthodoxy: mortality/immortality, death/life, light/darkness, to the exclusion of others, e.g. sin/grace, needs to a neglect of juridical aspects of salvation, the place of law and justification. The notion of an imputed or extrinsic righteousness is expressly denied.
- e. Grace includes the givenness of salvation (Rom 5:2; Eph 1:5-6; 2:5,8; Titus 2:11)

## 6. Orthodoxy and History

- a. Christian Schwarz (Natural Church Growth) “The task of the church is not to make plans, to implement changes and make ‘improvements’ . . . .”
- b. “Orthodox theology runs the danger of historically disincarnating the church. . . . The institutional dimension of the Church must always incarnate its eschatological nature without annulling the dialectic of this age and the age to come, the created and the uncreated, the being of God and that of man and the world.” (Zizioulas).
- c. The failure of Orthodoxy to take history seriously “has tended to paralyze missionary activity to an alarming degree.” (Zizioulas).

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 5 A: INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to understand the nature of modern theology without an appreciation of the radical changes in the climate of Western intellectual culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Often this is called the “Age of Reason” or the “Enlightenment”. The Enlightenment may be seen as fruit of the new approaches to knowledge, including religious knowledge, which began with the Renaissance of the late fourteenth century. Enlightenment thinking was dominated by four principles:

- ~~A~~.A. Reason: as the proper tool and the final authority for the determining issues.
- ~~B~~.B. Nature: in the “book of nature” all may read the laws of God. What is “natural” is what is right.
- ~~C~~.C. Progress: the present is generally considered to be an improvement on the past. As reason unveils nature human society moves to a better future.
- ~~D~~.D. Autonomy: rejection of external authority. In the light of contemporary knowledge tradition is found wanting. The use of personal reason is paramount.

Whereas the late medieval and Reformation debates were held within an assumption of the truth of Christianity, the Enlightenment challenged all assumptions. This meant an inevitable movement away from the tenets of revealed and historical religion, (Scripture and tradition) to natural religion, or, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone (Kant). This presented the greatest challenge to Christian theology in its history.

#### ~~2~~.1. ENLIGHTENMENT STREAMS

##### A. Science:

Copernicus (1473 – 1563) heliocentric view.

Galileo Galilei (1564 – 1642) rejection of Aristotle, (philosophy as the source of knowledge of the natural worlds), experience the source of knowledge, the world can be described mathematically, viz. empirically e.g. telescope.

Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626) – science as a means to rule nature, technology: “Knowledge is power”, primacy of the experimental method, rejection of received opinions: ‘idols of the cave’. Isaac Newton (1642 – 1727) – the universe as an orderly machine whose movements followed observable laws.

c. 1600 – medieval outlook on the world e.g. witchcraft, comets are portents.

c. 1700 – modern scientific outlook on reality.

##### B. Historical Criticism:

A method of distinguishing the true from the false in historical accounts. The critical historian does not think in terms of authorities but of sources and a distinction is made between what the sources reported and what actually happened. No witness to a past event is beyond suspicion. Applied to the Bible this meant that the history of Israel and the life of Jesus were often re-interpreted in terms of prevailing concepts as to what is natural or “normal”.

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Example: David Hume's critique of miracles. A miracle is a violation of a 'law of nature', this being the testimony of universal experience. As we must judge the probability of a miracle on the basis of usual experience, there could never be enough evidence for a miracle. In the case of the resurrection of Jesus, the miracle of mistaken testimony is more probable than the miracle of a physical resurrection.

C. Philosophy:

i. Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650)

Principle of doubt, the method of logical skepticism – “I think therefore I am” (cogito ergo sum)

Primacy of mathematical knowledge (certainty), cf. Cartesian geometry, via reason.

Rationalism – the mind is the source of truth vs empiricism, the senses can deceive.

Dualism – mind a 'thinking substance', body an 'extended substance'.

Proofs for the existence of God, the soul, immortality. Cf. G.W. Leibniz.

ii. John Locke (1632 – 1704)

Rejection of Cartesian concept of innate ideas – God, moral principles, freedom, (Platonism).

Empiricism – all knowledge is based on sensation or reflection on such experience. The mind begins as a “blank slate”.

Proofs for the existence of God (cosmological – experience tells us every effect has a cause), revelation as experience.

Christianity, divested of its scholastic baggage, is the reasonable form of religion. Does not claim absolute knowledge, hence: The Reasonableness of Christianity.

iii. Deism

A theological alternative to orthodoxy based on empiricism (after Locke).

Rejection of special revelation. All religion must conform to the reasonableness of natural religion. Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and Incarnation are particular and cannot be established by reason, therefore they are borrowed from paganism or inventions of the clergy.

iv. David Hume (1711 – 1776)

Carried empiricism to its logical conclusion. Nothing can be known which is not experienced. We do not experience causality but the regularity of events following one another, we then project this into the future. This criticism of induction undoes empiricism its earlier form. Neither do we experience substance but a series of impressions, e.g. size, colour, smell which we then attribute to a “thing”. The mind is never perceived, we attribute a variety of operations to a thinking substance we call “the mind”. This undoes Descartes cogito. Hume's epistemology (theory of knowledge) undermined the rational arguments for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul suggested by natural religion. This sort of theology (deistic) seemed to be at a dead end.

v Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)

Widely recognized as the most important of modern philosophers. Sought an explanation of human knowing beyond the limitations of rationalism and empiricism.

Critique of Pure Reason (1781) All the data of knowledge have an empirical (cf. empiricism) origin but are organised into an orderly form by the structure of the mind (cf. rationalism). Time, space, cause, effect and number are innate patterns by which the chaotic data of the senses are organised. It follows that the only substance is mental, this makes Kant an idealist. The mind can only know “phenomena”, objects beyond its organising structures, “noumena”, are unknowable. Any reality beyond time and space (metaphysical) cannot be known by the scientific enterprise. A purely intellectual use of reason leads to unresolvable opposites or antinomies.

Critique of Practical Reason (1788). Human beings do not only have sense experience but moral knowledge. The basic principle of morality is the “categorical imperative”, a sense of moral “ought” which is universally known. A pressure which tells us that certain principles of action should be universal rules for humanity. As a categorical it is necessary and independent of consequences. As an imperative it is a command. “Let justice be done even though the heavens fall”. (Or, the Gestapo get the Jews in the cellar.) Kant’s ethic is deontological. “Act only according to the maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a general law.”

Metaphysics is re-established on the basis of postulates needed to secure the moral life.

1. There must be a future life in which virtuous living is adequately rewarded.
2. God must exist as the guarantor of such moral justice.
3. Human freedom is a feature of the noumenal realm which serves as a basis for moral agency.

Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (1793). The function of true religion is to aid in the fulfilment of the categorical imperative. This is the test of religious truth and is universal and natural, based on the very nature of human life. Jesus did not found a religion but taught the highest form of natural religion. He is a sort of moral exemplar who encourages our pursuit of the victory of good over evil which characterizes the kingdom of God as an ethical commonwealth. Christian Scripture contains “the purest moral doctrine of religion in its completeness”. The aim of the scripture is “to make man better”, the historical element of the Bible is irrelevant to this. God will provide for our deficiencies and our reward will not be lost.

Kant’s arguments spelled the end of rationalistic religion in its philosophical form. The mind cannot grapple with the questions that lie beyond its grasp - the traditional arguments about the existence of God and the world are undermined. God, as noumenon, cannot be known by man neither can he make himself known, e.g. his critique of the cosmological argument. (“God” is a sort of cipher for a moral disposition.) Theology is swallowed up in moral anthropology. After Kant there seemed to be three options open to religious thinkers:

First, to ground religion on a faculty of mind other than pure reason eg. ethics. This was the course of Ritschl and his school. Schleiermacher would try to find a locus in the mind different from either speculative or moral reason.

Second, to return to revelation. Reason cannot be the judge of revelation, which is a noumenon. God in himself cannot be known, but only in his revelation which comes in human terms and so is knowable. This was the option followed by Soren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth.

Third, to extend Kant's assertion that the mind plays an active role in knowledge to the very nature of things. The universe behaves like a vast cosmic mind. This was the route of Hegel.

vi G.W.F.Hegel (1770 - 1831)

Kant had shown that what human subjects take for metaphysical truths are themselves the demands of subjectivity. This proposition is itself metaphysical. All there is, is the self-expression and self-realisation of subjectivity.

Hegel sought to understand all of reality, and the place of Christianity within it, in historical terms. Reality is the narrative unfolding of the principle of rationality in the universe - Spirit. Reality is a dynamic logic which moves through a dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis always seeking a new and fuller truth. Truth (logic) is the process itself. Every new synthesis is followed by its own antithesis. For example, the French monarchy (thesis) provoked a popular revolution (antithesis) which was then sublated into a synthesis of both, the Napoleonic regime.

The study of history became the study of truth itself in its dynamic and dialectical form. Hegel turned Kant's antinomies into a basis for understanding reality. History is the history of 'Spirit', time a process from the less to the more perfect. The human mind is the summit of knowing and knowledge. It is the responsibility of the mind to reflect and synthesize all perceived reality into a systematic whole.

God is the Absolute Idea, pure thought thinking pure thought, for there is nothing else to think about. Our consciousness of God is God's own positioning and grasping for himself a movement through which he may know himself. Christianity is the culmination of the unfolding of the Spirit - and is therefore an Absolute Religion. The often despised dogmas of Christianity are the representations of the very nature of reality. The Incarnation, for example, is the religious expression of the final coming together of God and humanity, which are no longer considered to be antithetical. Religion groups truths via images and representatives, philosophy grasps the same truths via their 'rational necessity.' True philosophy thinks the Christian symbols.

This effectively asserts the priority of philosopher over religion. When thought is fully realised in history, symbols would seem to have no more place. The Son, as the Meaning the Father finds in all things, can only be identified with Jesus of Nazareth in the manifestation of actual historical religion. Jesus can not have finality.

Although Hegel's system soon collapsed different elements of his thought proved influential. Theologically it inspired the projection theories of Ludwig Feuerbach (1844-1872) and D.F. Strauss (1808-1874). For Feuerbach God is humanity in self transcendence. For Strauss Jesus is a mythological projection of eternal ideals onto an historical figure. Hegel's view of the progressive unfolding of the Spirit was part of the background for the evolutionary views of Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882). The dialectical materialism of Karl Marx (1818 - 1883) is a transformation of Hegel's philosophy of history into the economic sphere.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 5 B : LIBERAL PROTESTANTISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The 19th century was a period of great change - religious disestablishment, social disruption brought on by the Industrial Revolution, rapid technological progress, the era of world missions. It produced the most active and original theological work since the sixteenth century. This was done within the context of an explosion of knowledge in such areas as anthropology, archaeology, philology and historiography. In theology most of the innovative work was done under the shadow of Kant's attack on rationalism. Attempts were made to find an *a priori* of religious knowledge in humans different from the moral imperative suggested by Kant, i.e. pre-empirical.

Liberalism in general claimed freedom in two directions: first, from traditional dogmas and creedal formulations; second, in the handling of historical texts and sources, It was an attempt to be truly scientific in theology. In theological terms liberal theology extends from the publication of Schleiermacher's work On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers (1799) until the outbreak of World War I in 1914 which destroyed European confidence in human progress.

#### 2. F.D.E. SCHLEIERMACHER (1763 - 1834)

A Reformed pastor. Usually considered the father of modern theology, his influence being on a par with that of Newton, Darwin, and Freud in their respective spheres. His work needs to be set in its historical milieu. Theologically he was influenced by Moravian Pietism. Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1700-1768) who established the Christian community at Herrnhut emphasised 'religion of the heart', Schleiermacher could refer to himself as a *Herrnhuter* 'of a higher order'. Culturally and socially he was influenced by the Romantic movement (Rousseau, Voltaire, Shelley, Coleridge etc.) with its emphasis on feelings, imagination and intuition. Kant is a strong philosophical source. (Religion as 'morality tinged with emotion'.) His first major work, On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers (1799) is addressed to his fellow romantics and opposes rationalism and moralism in religion. His greatest work is The Christian Faith (1821).

#### A. Our knowledge of God:

The proper locus for religion is neither science (natural religion, knowledge) nor morality (action, Kant) but human experience. God is given only as a lived postulate in human existence. Human persons are like works of art realised over time. Our consciousness's constitute unity with the world is an aesthetic sense of harmonious wholeness. Religious feeling or "piety" is "the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God". This is an experience essential to true humanity and is the nature of piety in all religions. It is not a feeling in the sense of an emotion but rather our constant, profound awareness of an Other whose presence is the source and basis of all that is - including ourselves. Statements about God's activities are not about God himself but about the way in which our feeling of absolute dependence is to be related to him, that is, religious experience.

Revelation is not about the supernatural communication of ideas to the mind. "Any original and new communication of the Universe to man is a revelation".

Words are inadequate to express the deepest feelings of religious self – consciousness, like music, they are a matter of ‘speech without words’. "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech" They are attempts to express affections which have reached a certain definiteness. However, as conceptualized, they are of less value than the exalted state of inspired speech. Grace is "the interchange between the entrance of the world into man, through intuition and feeling, and the outgoing of man into the world, through action and culture."

B. The Bible and revelation:

Revelation is not a system of propositions handed down, this would be doctrine. Revelation is: ‘a moment of the life of a thinking being who acts upon us directly as a distinctive existence by means of his total impression on us, and this working is always a working upon the self – consciousness.’ NB God as such does not speak. The Bible is special in that it records the religious experiences of the earliest Christian community. The New Testament is important because it preserves for succeeding generations the perfect God - consciousness of Jesus and its impact on the earlier Christians. Schleiermacher did not believe in supernatural intervention, this means that inspiration is an action which springs from human feeling and the influence of the Holy Spirit is only different quantitatively in the Scriptures from elsewhere, cf. poetic inspiration. Scripture, especially the Old Testament, is judged in the light of Christian experience, since the God – consciousness of God’s people, rather than the Bible, is the ultimate criterion in theology. Schleiermacher can emphasise both present Christian experience, the creeds and the Protestant confessions.

C. God:

Traditional ways of talking about God are anthropomorphisms. A timeless being cannot act, be ‘here’ or ‘there’ nor experience particulars.

Talk about God is always talk about human ways of experiencing God. The attributes of God, for example, are ways of talking about the relationship between God and humans. So, the holiness of God as displeasure at sin is disturbance in our God consciousness created by evil. Whether God be viewed as personal or as "the universal, productive, connecting necessity of all thought and existence", we have him in our feeling only by the emotions produced in or by the world, since God is "the highest, the only unity" beyond description. God acts in all things, but is acted on by nothing - so miracles, intercessory prayer and the supernatural intervention of God must be rejected as in conflict with proper God consciousness. God is a sort of power with who, there can be no reciprocity. The doctrine of the Trinity, being irrelevant to Christian consciousness, is relegated to an appendix. The trinity, as God-in-himself, is unknowable; there can be no role for the Holy Spirit as a distinct entity. (For God-as-Trinity is not experienced immediately.)

#### D. Jesus Christ:

Since we have no feeling for the whole of reality, but only for particulars, there are only historically particular religions. The experiential focus of Christian experience is the fellowship of Christ.

For Schleiermacher Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. We need to be redeemed from sin, which is our failure to achieve God-consciousness. Sin is a matter of God-forgetfulness, the subordination of the feeling of absolute dependence to pleasure and pain. Jesus is divine only in the sense that he always had a perfect God-consciousness. This does not require a virgin birth. It is Jesus' absolute and patent God-consciousness which qualifies him to be our redeemer, he is the archetype and founder of the Christian Faith. His redemptive work lies in his communication of his God-consciousness to others. He does this by assuming believers into his own God-consciousness. To become unconscious of our life and conscious of his life is the passage from sin to perfection. It is the act of freedom in which we are redeemed. The work of Jesus Christ as perceived by Schleiermacher makes his resurrection, ascension and second coming superfluous. The disciples, for example, know Jesus as redeemer apart from these doctrines.

#### E. The Church:

Jesus founded a fellowship, this mediates his God-consciousness. The giving of the Spirit is the beginning of an organised community which depends upon the Redeemer. This is not the same as the true church, as there is an indivisible fellowship of saints which embraces all religions. Through the Scriptures, preaching, the sacraments, excommunication and prayer in the name of Jesus the prophetic, priestly and kingly activity of Jesus is continued. For example, in preaching, the preacher shares his own religious feeling so as to 'infect' others.

#### F. Comments

##### (i) Positively:

- (a) Stressed the corporate nature of the Church, versus Pietistic individualism.
- (b) Reflected on tradition, versus Romanticism.
- (c) Christocentric, versus rationalism and Kant. Everything is centred on redemption.
- (d) Christians to be active in the world, the gospel has social dimensions.

##### (ii) Negatively

- (a) Anthropocentric - tried to speak about God by speaking about man in a very loud voice (Barth). When theologians de-personalise God they theologise anthropology.
- (b) Panentheistic - denied that radical separation between God and the world which is a prerequisite for revelation and a genuine personal relationship.
- (c) Optimistic - replaced sin as depravity with moral imperfection.
- (d) Christologically inadequate - functional Christology denies the uniqueness of the essential Person of Jesus. Jesus is an exemplar and a teacher. There is no explanation within Schleiermacher's own scheme for the unique place he gives to Jesus.

(e) Pluralistic – the colour and tone of Christianity, rather than its content and subject matter, distinguish it from other religions. (Barth)

In effect, all major theological terms undergo a radical change of meaning. Schleiermacher, for example, sin, guilt, incarnation, atonement. Schleiermacher: 'put discovery in the place of revelation. The religious consciousness in the place of the word of God, and the mere "not yet" in the place of sin.' (H.R. Mackintosh).

G. Impact:

After Schleiermacher neo-Protestant theology would be dominated by his general methodology.

(a) Analysis of human existence - to locate the experimental home of religion.

(b) Non-objectivity of God-religion is a matter of subjective experience.

(c) Historical procedure – history is the reality of actual religious life.

(d) Christocentric – Jesus fulfils an identified general need.

3. ALBRECHT RITSCHL (1822-1889)

Dominant interpreter of 'liberal' theology: so called as it fitted the civil and churchy aspirations of the bourgeoisie.

Departed from the Hegelian philosophy and its intellectual speculation (idealism). Returned to Kant's emphasis on morality and the practical character of religion. Rejected Schleiermacher as a Romantic attempt to bypass Kant's challenge.

(1) Theological Method:

Turned to history as the cure for both subjectivism and rationalism. Religious knowledge is neither scientific nor metaphysical but consists in value judgements which cannot be proved. Religious knowledge has to do with the value things have for the individual's ultimate fulfilment. These values are found in the Kingdom of God revealed in Jesus. Theology is the investigation of the collective religious and moral experience of the Kingdom of God in the church. It makes use of historical-critical research into the self consciousness of the real Jesus and his impact on the earliest Christians, "the apostolic circle of ideas". This was a search for the essence of Christianity or the kernel of the husk, free from dogmatic projections.

(2) The Kingdom of God:

Humanity is specifically called to establish the 'kingdom of God'. A realm of rationally dictated political and social love. God is love. To know God is to know we are supremely loved. Propositions about God in himself are empty. The goal of God's kingdom, and of God, is the moral unification of the human race through love. Faith has no interest in God apart from his action in the world. We can only act freely in the face of deterministic forces if we trust a will who gives the law morally to our action and naturally to the world.



(3) Jesus Christ:

From Jesus' teaching and death we learn that God is love. So despite our consciousness of guilt we need not fear God.

To speak of Jesus' deity is to speak of his perfect humanity. Jesus was God in the sense that he had a perfect knowledge of God and was united to him in perfect moral obedience. Because Christians experience God's love in Jesus Christ they ascribe to him the value of God. To ask metaphysical questions about Jesus is to depart from true religious knowledge.

(4) Sin and Salvation:

Denied original sin and replaced it with a notion of selfishness. The concept of the wrath of God contradicts his love. As guilt is the consciousness of our failure to fulfil our moral destiny, there can be no objective expiation. Atonement is the removal of this subjective state. God takes action to forgive our sins through Jesus Christ, this is justification. The ethical focus of the kingdom of God is in the call of God to fulfil the ideal of love towards the neighbour.

(5) Comments:

(i) Positively

- (a) Separated religious from scientific knowledge.
- (b) Emphasis on the "social gospel", society needs reordering.

(ii) Negatively

- (a) Subjectivism - divorce of faith from facts.
- (b) Moralism - "culture Protestantism", identified the moral idea with contemporary values. "the very epitome of the rational - liberal German bourgeois of the age of Bismarck" (Barth)
- (c) Reductionist - doctrine of God and Christology is restrictive.

4. ADOLF VON HARNACK (1851-1930)

Height of liberal influence. Great patristic scholar and historian of doctrine. Sought to answer the question "What is Christianity?"

(1) Kernel and Husk:

Separation of what is the form of the gospel as it is recorded in the New Testament from its essential content of permanent validity. Believed that the simple message was Jesus was subjected to legalism and fossilization (dogma).

(2) Historical Sources:

John is useless, the synoptics present an imperfect first hand tradition. Miracles cannot be taken literally.

(3) The Kingdom of God:

Inward rule of a holy God in the human heart, Encompasses individual forgiveness as a gift, gives meaning back to life.

(4)The Fatherhood of God and the Infinite Value of the Human Soul.

Christianity is the religion of Jesus, rather than the religion about Jesus, which is dogma. This shift begins with Paul.

(5)The Higher Righteousness and the Commandment of Love.

(6)Christology:

The gospel has to do with the Father only and not the Son. Jesus is the personal realisation of the gospel. Jesus' Sonship is to be understood in terms of his unique knowledge of God and his unique message to communicate it. To go beyond this, as was done in the patristic period onwards, was to "hellenise" the gospel. Abstract metaphysics, as in theories of the incarnation, was to be abandoned.

(7)Comments.

(a) Interprets God's word and work in terms of humanity, rather than the reverse. Prior judgement about the possibilities of revelation in history.

(b) Subjective - no way of deciding which is husk and which is kernel

(c) Individualistic - Christianity is a matter of "the soul and its God". Separation of the religious from the secular sphere. 'The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen the bottom of a deep well.'

(G. Tyrell, cited in Lane, p. 188).

H.R. Niebuhr's famous summary of Liberal Protestantism: 'A God without wrath brought man without sin into a kingdom without judgement through the ministration of a Christ without a cross.'

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 6 : NEO - ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

#### A: KARL BARTH (1886-1968)

##### 1. INTRODUCTION:

By the commencement of World War I Liberal Protestant theology had dominated the field of innovative religious thinking for over a hundred years. Both conservative Protestantism of the Princeton variety and American Fundamentalism seemed to lack the dynamics needed to face the challenges posed by the War for Western civilisation. Roman Catholicism was in a similar situation. The horrors of the European conflict had exposed the bankruptcy of the liberal message based on human progress and perfectibility. Barth immersed himself in the Scriptures, and reconsidered the Reformers, modern prophets like Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky became important. Convinced that nineteenth century theology had no future, and particularly in strong reaction to Schleiermacher, Barth was convinced that: "The ship was threatening to run aground; the moment was at hand to turn the rudder an angle of exactly 180 degrees." Theology had become 'religionistic', 'anthropocentric' and 'humanistic'. Confrontation with the contemporary age had become liberal theology's primary concern. Barth sought a new foundation for theology, this was Jesus as the Word incarnate. In 1919 he published "The Epistle to the Romans", which "landed like a bombshell in the playground of the theologians". It created such a furor that Protestant theology could never be the same again; for many scholars it marked the beginning of twentieth century theology. (Neo-orthodoxy picked up themes in Calvinism and orthodox Lutheranism, but tried to interpret God's self-revelation afresh.) Later Barth began to work on an extended theological exposition called the Church Dogmatics. This occupied his life for forty years and ran to thirteen volumes or approximately 6 million words. All serious students of theology need to have a familiarity with Barth's thought. He has been so influential that even Pope Pius XII described Barth as "the greatest theologian since St Thomas Aquinas"

##### 2. THEOLOGICAL METHOD

###### A. Dialectical Method. (Theology of Crisis)

Barth was influenced by Kierkegaard, because of human sin and the reality that God is "wholly other" God's truth and human thought cannot be smoothed out into a rational synthesis. There is an "infinite qualitative distinction" between man and God, between time and eternity. God therefore confronts man "from above " precipitating a crisis in his existence. This is an inversion of liberalism, where God appears as a moral – religious posit in the meeting of our religious quest with the message of Christ. The gospel however does not affirm our striving, but critiques it. This emphasis on the transcendence of the deity is especially strong in the 'early Barth'. Here is an example from his 1922 edition of the Epistle to the Romans, introducing his comments on Romans 9: "God, the pure and absolute boundary and beginning of all that we are and have to do; God, who is distinguished qualitatively from men and from everything human, and must never be identified with anything which we name, or experience, or

conceive, or worship, as God; God, who confronts all human disturbance with an unconditional command 'Halt', and all human disturbance with an unconditional command 'Advance'; God the 'Yes' in our 'No' and the 'No' in our 'Yes', the First and the Last, and, consequently, the unknown, who is never a known thing in the midst of other known things; God the Lord, the Creator, the Redeemer- this is the living God. In the Gospel, in the message of Salvation of this Jesus Christ, this Hidden, Living, God has revealed Himself, as He is. Above and beyond the apparently infinite series of possibilities and visibility's in this world there breaks forth, like a flash of lightning, impossibility and invisibility, not as some separate, second, other thing, but as the truth of God which is now hidden, as the Primal Origin to which all things are related, as the dissolution of all relativity, and therefore as the reality of all relative realities. Through – nay rather, because – human life is temporal, infinite, and passing to corruption, it is revealed in the Gospel that the glorious, triumphant, existential inevitability of the Kingdom of God cannot be hidden. It is made manifest that the knowledge of God – faith working through love – is presented to men as the possibility which though realised at no particular moment in time, is nevertheless, open to them at every moment, as the new and realisable possibility of their being what they are in God – His children – cast, as men of this world, under judgement, looking for righteousness and awaiting redemption, but under grace, already liberated.” (K. Barth 1922: 330-332).

The religious quest is ended by the presence in our world of an object that is God, blocking our attempts at self – transcendence. Time does not roll into eternity, but is interpreted through the narrative reality of Jesus Christ. Contrary to Kant, God, who is his own object, has made himself into our object, contrary to Bultmann, the otherness of the encountered object breaks my unauthentic project of self – securing.

## B. Rejection of Natural Theology

Barth opposed every attempt to gain knowledge of God from nature, culture or philosophy. He saw this as the fundamental error of Liberal "culture" Protestantism, sharply exposed by the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1841) who claimed that God was created in man's image. Feuerbach was followed in this by Marx and Freud. For Barth the poverty of liberalism was exposed by the German theological establishment's support of the Kaiser's war policies and the rise of the "German Christians" who hailed Hitler as a God - sent deliverer. This was where Schleiermacher's confusion of God with man led. As Barth later put it: 'What if by talking about Christianity as a religion these theologians had already ceased to speak about Christianity and hence were unable to communicate the faith with authority to those on the outside.' Exactly as neo – Protestantism had said, religion was humanity's attempt at self – transcendence. The God of religion, including Christianity, is an idol. A critique of religion could only be conducted because of the intrusion of the gospel into the religious enterprise.

The Barmen Declaration of 1934, which Barth helped write, stated that Jesus Christ is the only Lord of Christians and that this exclusively applies to all of life. The first article of this appears below (from C.D. ii/i, p. 172). "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the father, but by me" (Jn 14:6).

"Verily, verily I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.... I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (Jn 10: 1-9). Jesus Christ, as He is attested to us in

the Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, whom we have to hear and whom we have to trust and obey in life and death. We condemn the false doctrine that the Church can and must recognise as God's revelation other events and powers, forms and truths, apart from and alongside this one Word of God.'

Here is how Barth saw the problem at the time:

'In a really distressing way – infinitely more distressing than in the 16<sup>th</sup> century – the conception of eternity had lost its depth and perspective, so that finally the point was reached where the assertion of it was hardly if at all to be distinguished from the denial of its contents. In the last resort – here if anywhere we can see the results in one – sidedness in this matter – it became little more than an exclamation mark with no positive content, so that it could be placed not only behind the word "God" but behind any word at all denoting supreme value, even in the very last analysis, as we have seen under National Socialism, behind the word "Germany." Preferences and prejudices of this kind in the sphere of Christian truth are usually the beginning of its total secularisation.' (C.D. ii/i, p. 632f.)

The identification of God with religious consciousness left human beings without any ultimate reference point outside their cultural experience. Barth's opposition to National Socialism led to his expulsion from Germany (1935) but greatly assisted the influence of his theology.

The other form of natural theology he stringently opposed was the traditional approach of Roman Catholicism, following Thomas Aquinas. In particular he denied the "analogy of being": The being of man is like the being of God, not by participation (pantheism) but by analogical relation. We must assume that the cause produces a certain likeness in its effects, otherwise a knowledge of God would be impossible. From the analogy of being it follows that there is a true, if limited, knowledge of God available from nature and humankind.

For Barth, this was impossible, God is neither an Object, an It, which can be accessed by human persons, nor anything other than supremely transcendent. Truth about God cannot be grounded in creaturely being. In addition to this (ontological consideration), there is nothing in men and women which exists in a positive relationship to the revelation of God. There is no pre-existing bridge in humans to God, God established an analogy between himself and humanity in Jesus Christ. As the eternal Logos, Jesus is the ratio essendi of the image of God in which all humankind is created (this includes idiots and unbelievers). The analogy with humanity is the "analogy of faith". It corresponds to the revelation of the Word of God (Jesus). Knowledge of God is not an innate human capacity nor derived from nature, it is possible only because God graciously gives it to us in Jesus the God-man. The gospel comes to us not as an aeroplane seeking a suitable landing strip in our existing consciousness, but as a bomb which clears its own space to land.

There is no potentia obedientialis, no knowledge of God outside of Christ. One either "sees" Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life or one does not. "The eternal God is to be known in Jesus Christ and not elsewhere". "The possibility of knowledge of God's Word lies in God's Word and nowhere else" The possibility of the knowledge of God is its actuality, theology (true "God – talk") is a miracle. Any attempt to prove Christ, as in apologetics, borders on idolatry, for it calls God and his revelation before the bar of human reason .

Barth opposes both Protestant Orthodoxy (“Fundamentalism”) and Protestant Liberalism as each presupposes a conceptual system reached before and apart from the actual knowledge of God given in Christ. They are equally rationalistic in supposing an affinity exists between the human mind and the mind of God (an analogia entis). Liberals bring in a philosophy from secular culture in order to expound theology. Fundamentalists objectify revelation in logically rigid propositions. (In its use of Aristotelian and Newtonian views of Causality the Augustinian – Calvinist synthesis of Hyper – Calvinism falls into dualistic modes of thought that do not pertain to the Word of God.) For Barth: “The proof of faith consists in the proclamation of faith. The proof of the knowledge of the Word (of God) consists in confessing it”. Faith is a self-authenticating gift of God. ‘The statement of revelation that God speaks is identical with the statement that man hears.’

(C.D. I/1, p. 242)

### 3. THE WORD OF GOD.

#### A. Its Threefold Form.

The subject of dogmatics is the Word of God. The old orthodoxy erred by making God's Word a static object (such as the Bible) which man can dissect and analyse - like a dead body. But God's Word confronts us not as an object which we can control but as a subject which controls and acts upon us. God's Word is the event of God speaking to us through Jesus Christ. It is not a static manual (like a railway timetable), but a dynamic event demanding a response (like a proposal of marriage).

The threefold form of the Word is the Word preached, Word written, and Word revealed. The Word is proclaimed on the presupposition that God's Word is the commission (to preach), the theme (of preaching), the judgement (brought about), and the event (between God and us). The Word written (the Bible) implies that proclamation rests on the Word already spoken by the prophets and apostles as a given factor, that is, the canon, by which the Church is called, empowered and guided. The Word written is a witness to the Word revealed - as an artist might "capture" a flash of lightning on his canvas. The revealed Word is the revelation which Scripture recollects as written (like John the Baptist its function is to point to Jesus Christ), and proclamation points forward to as promise. "Revelation does not differ from the person of Jesus Christ." God's word then cannot be captured, God's faithfulness to us will not allow this. As such it cannot be reduced to any human system.

#### B. Its Nature

- i Speech - it is God speaking, conveying his purposeful presence.
- ii Act - it is a decision of God to be present to man with the power to rule. It is the word who decides which a human being is (election).
- iii Mystery - The Word is veiled in that it comes not only as the Word of God but enters the world as the word of man, i.e. in secular form. If we hear, receive, believe and obey the Word this takes place only as the miracle of the Holy Spirit and not as our own work. We can know the Word of God as the Word of God only through its own powerful working.

Any attempt to objectify the Word is an attempt to make the knowledge of God a work of man. ‘Man must be set aside, and God Himself presented as the original

subject, as the primary power, as the creator of the possibility of knowledge of God's Word.' (C.D. I/1, p. 247).

#### 4. HOLY SCRIPTURE.

A. Witness. This form "distinguishes the Bible as such from revelation" It sets before us that to which it witnesses. The biblical word is a human word, but its object is divine revelation. Even where the Bible may fail to be genuinely historical, revelation can be heard in it if one listens.

#### B. The Word of God.

The Bible is a very human work, but in its function it is "divine". Christianity is a book religion. Scripture, "as the original legitimate witness of divine revelation is itself the Word of God". It is so in the present sense by "a divine disposing, action and decision "Seen in itself Scripture is a human word, subjected to criticism, shown to have gaps and over emphases, a source of offence. It is God's Word, not as an inherently inerrant compendium of knowledge, but as an act of revelation which has to be believed.

In the event of its self-imposition upon us the Bible is God's Word. This is God's affair, God's gift, God's grace. "The Bible is God's Word to the extent that He causes it to be His Word, to the extent that he speaks through it." This is not a description of our experience of the Bible, but of God's action in the Bible. (See C.D. I/1, p. 109f). Despite its human vulnerability it is the one Word of God. "Holy Scripture has more power than all the rest of the world together, despite appearances to the contrary."

#### C. Inspiration.

The Word is God's act and miracle beyond our control. The miracle lies in the very fact that Scripture is God's Word in true (fallible) humanity. This is an act of God's freedom and not an attribute of the Bible. It is God who decides what parts of Scripture are, or are adapted to be, God's Word. This is not a matter of our decision nor feeling. Inspiration is verbal inspiration, "God....says what the text says" but this is only known through God's presence in our present efforts at understanding. Because the Bible is God's Word we recognise it as such, it is not God's Word because of our faith in it but is constituted by the witness of the Spirit

#### D. Authority in the Church.

Revelation constitutes supreme authority, but revelation is uniquely related to the biblical authors, whose witness in Scripture is for us what Jesus Christ was for them. In these terms the authority of Scripture is absolute. The authority of the Church is one of obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ witnessed to in Holy Scriptures by the Spirit. Through the Scriptures the Church sees and hears Christ. Under the authority of the Word the Church finds its true freedom.

#### E. The Trinity.

In contradistinction to Schleiermacher Barth placed the doctrine of the Trinity at the start of his Dogmatics. This recovered the function of the doctrine, from its subordination to the doctrine of the one God in western theology. The doctrine of the trinity is to identify the God to whom subsequent discourse will refer and to establish

the primary framework of concepts and boundaries with which systematic problems will be addressed."The doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian, and therefore what already distinguishes the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation."

His doctrine of the Trinity has been considered the most important contribution to trinitarian theology since Augustine, as it inaugurated the trinitarian renewal of the twentieth century.

#### F. Christology.

Orthodox doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ. Intensely Christocentric, Barth's Christocentric approach makes his theology a system.

The beginning, centre and end of every doctrine is the event of Jesus Christ - his life, death, resurrection, exaltation and eternal union with the Father. Christ is the primal content of God's choice that there be something other than God. Since God's choice is his own actuality, the history of Jesus is the self – determination of God. According to Colossians 1:18 Jesus Christ always comes first. Jesus then, not some view of history nor human religious experience, is our starting point for Christology. Barth's "Christological concentration" means that the event of reconciliation is central to everything. Creation and consummation are shadows or reflections, prior and subsequent, of the central Event that embraces everything. Theologically, reconciliation is the real content of all the other events.

So, the covenant of grace in Jesus is 'the inner foundation of creation' The Yes of God in creation, is an echo of the Yes of God in the victory of Jesus Christ. Similarly, in Barth's thought, sin is logically subsequent to the event which destroys it. Jesus must be the first sinner in the eyes of God in respect to judgement: "That this was true of Adam, and is true of us, is the case only because in God's counsel, and in the event of Golgotha, it became true first of all in Jesus Christ" (C.D.II/2, p. 739). Given such a perspective it becomes clear why Barth can say: "The history of Jesus Christ ... is my history." Who God is and who we are is fully proclaimed in Jesus Christ. There can be no knowledge of God outside Christ.

#### G. Election.

Approached the doctrine of election from a new perspective. All previous attempts to define predestination in Western theology were either Augustinian, semi-Augustinian or anti-Augustinian. Barth rejects the "absolute decree" of Calvinism by which men and women are predestined into Christ. This makes Christ simply the exhibitor of a prior decision in which he apparently had no active part. As God however, Jesus Christ is the electing God, the subject of election (Elector). As man Jesus Christ is the object and content of divine election. God – in - himself and man – in – himself are abstractions. God and humanity are only truly knowable in Christ. We are chosen "in him", his election includes within itself the election of all others, even if people refuse to recognise this. His election is an election to suffering and reprobation. In him is worked out the double predestination of God. Faith in Jesus is election in him. This is the ground of Christian assurance.



As Jesus is the final truth about all men and women: ‘unbelief has become an objective, real and ontological impossibility’ (C.D. IV/I, p. 747), and faith a corresponding necessity. Faith is a response to the objective reality of salvation. Its status is internal and analytic rather than external and synthetic. It enacts consequences in relation to something which is in itself and as such already valid, effective and complete for all. Yet, since humankind’s capacity for falsehood is lethal, Barth refuses to embrace universalism.

#### H. Comments.

- (i) Negatively.
  - (a) Rejection of natural theology and apologetics removes all links with disciplines outside theology and with common human experience. Isolates the Christian faith. Does not give enough space to general revelation.
  - (b) An exclusive revelation focus rather than a worship model (doxological) leads to an under emphasis on communion with God the trinity, and hence our participation in it. This correction needs to be worked out in terms of Christ’s sympathetic priesthood for us. Contrary to a divine singularity model (Barth), Jesus’ own response to God constitutes the conditions for humanity’s participation in God. As priest, he was not only judged in our place once for all, but worships for, with and in us, presenting us to the Father.
  - (c) Christomonistic - extreme focus on Christology tends to restrict the place left to the Father and Spirit in the concrete history of revelation and redemption. The Father, for example, seems almost excluded from election.
  - (d) Overemphasis on the fallibility of the authors of Scripture. This cannot be supported by Barth’s own principles of authority.
  - (e) Doctrine of election points towards universalism. "I do not teach it, and I do not not teach it."
  - (f) Tends to weaken the place of humanity in its dealings with God. The opposite error to Schleiermacher. The ‘later Barth’ recognised this, e.g. The ‘later Barth’ recognised this, e.g. C.D. II/I, 634f. God chooses not to be without man.
  - (g) A number of the above limitations illustrate the lack of genuine historicity in Barth. Everything has really been decided in eternity in the election of Jesus. Salvation is reduced to an “enlightenment” about things as they have already been completed, such as universal reconciliation. There is a totalizing tendency in Barth. The tendency to exalt protology over eschatology leads to dehistoricizing. (Hence an underdeveloped pneumatology.)
- (ii) Positively.
  - (a) Recovery of the doctrine of the Trinity from obscurity.
  - (b) Centrality of the Person of Jesus Christ.
  - (c) Returned the Bible to a central place in Christian theology.
  - (d) Emphasis on the all sufficiency of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 6 : NEO ORTHODOXY (2)

#### B. EMIL BRUNNER (1889-1965)

##### A.. INTRODUCTION :

In the years after W.W.I Brunner joined Barth, Bultmann and others in a sustained attack on nineteenth century Liberal Theology. Since his general concerns were the same as Barth's, and since he, like Barth, rejected Protestant orthodoxy's identification of the Word of God with the Bible his theology is recognised as neo-orthodox. He differed strongly from Barth on the nature of man after the Fall and so the place of general revelation. These differences made him more open to dialogue with the secular world and the representatives of non-Christian religions.

##### B. BIBLICAL PERSONALISM:

In 1923 the Jewish religious philosopher Martin Buber published *I and Thou*. This distinguished between 2 types of truth and knowledge. "I-It" knowledge concerns our experience of things, the observation and manipulation of spatio-temporal objects and processes. "I-Thou" knowledge involves the whole person at the deepest level. It concerns our knowledge of persons. It is this sort of knowledge which constitutes real life. Only through this knowledge can we enjoy communion with God.

According to Brunner God is only knowable in a divine – human encounter which transcends the subject – object dualism of "I-It", knowledge and calls for a response of the total person. (Theology of crisis). This type of truth is personal, and it is God's call for decision. It is a fundamental error to consider theological knowledge to be of the same (objective) sort as that of the natural sciences.

##### C. REVELATION:

Brunner's extreme personalism led him to reject propositional revelation – the truth of God cannot be objectified in ideas. The Word of God is not at our disposal. In revelation God is communicated. The propositions about God arise out of the divine – human encounter, this however is not revelation but the witness to revelation. To equate revelation with human words would be to deny its transcendence.

Scripture is uniquely important as the central (apostolic) witness to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true word of God, and the Scripture is the "crib in which Christ lies" (Luther). The Bible is not authoritative because it is inerrant truth, but "because Christ, whom I am convinced in my conscience is the Truth, meets me in the Scriptures..." In this way Brunner sought an alternative to the orthodox-liberal antithesis.

##### D. CHRISTOLOGY:

In terms of the Person and work of Christ Brunner's theology was entirely orthodox. His approach to Christology was historical and not mythological. Jesus Christ is the

Word and the Word is Jesus Christ. He felt however that the classical (Chalcedonian) definition of the 2 natures of Christ (fully God – fully man) was contradicted by the doctrine of the virgin birth. This doctrine is not found in Paul, John or the apostolic preaching and has been embraced by heretics. Brunner saw it as a relic of Hellenistic asceticism which contradicted the biblical doctrine of creation and incarnation.

#### E THE IMAGE OF GOD AND NATURAL THEOLOGY:

Brunner treated Genesis 3 in a symbolic manner. Adam is every one of us, and the original sin occurs at the moment we become aware of ourselves as an “I” and enter into an act of rebellion against God. (This is inexplicable.) “I love not God but myself with all my heart and with all my soul, and with all my power. I am neighbour to myself.’

The Augustinian doctrine of the transmission of sin through Adam as a representative man and via procreation is rejected as unbiblical. This doctrine cuts us off from immediate creation in the image of God. In opposition to a causal explanation of sin, sin is both personal, ‘I am a sinner’, and social.

In opposition to Barth, Brunner maintained that the image of God, as the capacity to have fellowship with God as-a-man in the “I-Thou” divine - human encounter, was not totally destroyed by sin. Rather the image of God, as a relationship with God (personal knowledge) remains but in a perverted form. God continues to deal with man as a responsible being and man still responds to God – by idolatry – in his conscience. “Even now man is entirely understood as God’s image – but as his perverted image: the wine of God’s love bestowed on him has turned sour and become the vinegar of enmity to God. Sin is faith turned upside down and can be understood in no other way...” Sin puts men and women in contradiction with themselves.

Anxiety is a failure to be united to God. Guilt is a sign of separation from God that the original relationship with God has been destroyed. (An eternal relationship means an eternal guilt.) Hedonism is a sign of a lost future. Nevertheless, the oppositional nature of sin means that a point of contact is found in men for the gospel. Although humanity has no power in itself to respond to God, grace has a foothold. Barth attacked Brunner’s minimal “natural theology” with venom. He saw it as a betrayal of salvation by grace alone and an open door to a compromise with Nazi ideology. This controversy continued until both men were in old age.

#### 6. COMMENTS:

- (a) Lacks the scope and genius of Barth’s Dogmatics.
- (b) Closer to Scripture than Barth on the subject of “ general revelation”
- (c) Tends to subjectivism and inconsistency in his doctrine of Scripture
- (d) Personalist emphasis has become part of main-stream theology.
- (e) High Christology and powerful hamartiology.

## C. DIETRICH BONHOEFFER + (1906 – 1945)

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Bonhoeffer was educated under the leading liberal thinkers of his day, including Adolph von Harnack. He soon came under the influence of Barth and aligned himself with the German Confessing Church and the Barmen Declaration in its opposition to Nazism.

His most important early work was the Cost of Discipleship (1937). Letters and Papers from Prison were fragmentary and published posthumously after his execution for – involvement in (violent) plots against Hitler. His death was seen by many as a martyrdom and had a profound effect on many young theological students in the idealistic 1960's.

### 2. CHEAP AND COSTLY GRACE:

Bonhoeffer attacked the mainstream Lutheran devotion of his day which, he said, had perverted the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone. Christianity had been turned into a pious fraud, and its end a meaningless “cheap grace”. “Cheap grace” is the preaching of forgiveness without repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without contrition. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate”. Cheap grace was the doctrine of justification to “justify” the living a life of sin, that is a life apart from the obedience of discipleship. For Bonhoeffer: “Only he who believes obeys and only he who obeys believes.”

Obedience is both the consequence and presupposition of faith – they are mutually generating. Everything depends on the first step – leaving the nets, giving riches to the poor. If you find it hard to believe it is because you refuse to obey. The first step is not a work but keeping your eyes fixed on the call of Jesus. The call of the creative Word has no presuppositions but itself, it is its own basis. Something happens to rather than by human nature and it's possibilities. Discipleship doesn't begin with: “I will...” cf. Matt 8:19; Luke 9: 57, but with a detachment from binding to self. (cf. “It all depends on me.”) The poor know they have no self-sufficiency. In the re-contextualisation of the call, the relationship with God, rather than the self, becomes determinative. Here is the creation of a new meaning frame. Jesus did not establish a school but a ministry which tried to wake people up to the fact that their primacy context was God.

The reality is that grace is not cheap but costly. Bonhoeffer focussed on the call of Jesus expressed in the Gospels. “When Jesus Christ calls a man he bids him come and die”. “(Costly) grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son” .

Everything depends on how the doctrine of grace is used. “ .... If grace is the data for my Christian life, it means that I set out to live the Christian life in the world with all my sins justified beforehand. I can go and sin as much as I like, and rely on this grace to forgive me, for after all the world is justified in principle by grace. I can therefore

cling to my bourgeois secular existence, and remain as I was before, but with the added assurance that the grace of God will cover me” . The word of forgiveness however is addressed only to those who follow Christ, making “from the bottom of their hearts ... a daily renunciation of sin and of every barrier which hinders them from following...’

### 3. RELIGIONLESS CHRISTIANITY:

Towards the end of his life Bonhoeffer moved from the theme of the presence of Christ in the church to the question of the presence of Christ in the world.

In the crisis of wartime Europe, as Kant had once put it, the world and humanity had “come of age”. Bonhoeffer viewed the consequences of approximately six centuries of progressive secularisation in all spheres of existence – science, art, education, politics, ethics as a necessary development which could not be reversed, despite its horrendous consequences. There could be no going back to the old Christendom. “God would have us know that we must live as men who manage their lives without him... Before God and with God we live without God . God lets himself be pushed out of the world onto a cross”.

The reality of the world come of age and the impotence of Christianity in the face of it has provoked a crisis in the Christian religion. It is immoral simply to catch modern man in moments of weakness and lead him back to religion. This is like requiring Gentile converts to be circumcised. Bonhoeffer took up Barth’s attack on religion as an idolatrous attempt to escape a personal existential encounter with God in Christ. The all-powerful, ‘naked’ God of absolute divinity is petitioned in the pagination of Christian devotion as someone to protect and rescue. The gospel reveals a God clothed with human flesh, who asks us to follow him and deny ourselves in the way of suffering. He proposed a religionless, or “worldly” Christianity, by which one may live, “even if there was no God”; in which the gift of oneself comes before petition, and whole – hearted commitment to others takes precedence over concern for one’s own salvation. This was an attempt to interpret theological concepts in a non-religious way. The Christian today must speak of God and live his life in a secular manner. “It is not the religious act that makes a Christian, but participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life.”

“Religionless Christianity” is the way God would have us live today. This meant a freedom from other-worldliness, individualism and the confining of faith to one small and ever-dwindling area of life. We are to find God in what we know, not as the God-of-the-gaps. As the centre of all of life we are to find God as “the Beyond, in the midst of our life.” This means that the Church must not be preoccupied with its own salvation but serve the world as Jesus did, “the man for others”. This can only mean a participation with God in the sufferings of the world. In the contemporary situation in which talk about God has lost its meaning, traditional churchly language must remain silent, Christian speaking can only be reborn out of praying for and working on behalf of others. Only in this way could God be communicated and the mysteries of the Christian faith preserved from profanation.

### 4 COMMENTS

Unfortunately the brief and unfinished character of Bonhoeffer's prison writings led to considerable ambiguity. On the one hand he was taken up by the radical theologians of the 60s who propounded a secular theology, such as the "death of God" movement. More traditional theologians found in his teachings a source of inspiration in living out faithful discipleship in an alien and hostile environment.

Bonhoeffer correctly intuited the collapse of institutionalised religion, but underestimated the resilience of spirituality. This was to surface in the interest in New Age religion, something of a counter to the objectivistic, institutionalistic paradigm of late modern Christianity.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 7 A: THE EXISTENTIALISTS (1)

#### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Existentialism refers to a method rather than a school and existentialists can be Protestant, Roman Catholic, agnostic or atheistic. What all existentialists have in common is a commitment to a particular way of knowing the human person. Existentialism is a reaction to the Cartesian method of treating human being and non-human being as one category and the attempt to apply the objectivism of the natural sciences to understanding man. The truth about human existence can only be known from within, "Truth is Subjectivity". Human beings know themselves from their inner subjective awareness, they do not share this property with "beings-in-general". Usually, everything, including the Bible, is tested by its ability to illuminate the meaning of human existence. Some important existentialists are Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber, Albert Camus, Paul Tillich, Rudolph Bultmann and Jean Paul Sartre. Existentialism dominated the philosophical and theological scene in the '60s and early '70s.

#### 2. SOREN KIERKEGAARD (1813-1855)

##### A. Introduction:

Kierkegaard is the father of the existentialist approach. He stands out as an early but lonely prophetic voice against nominal and liberal Christianity, seeking to 'reintroduce Christianity into Christendom.' In the context of the Lutheran state church of Denmark, where God had been domesticated and people were considered Christians by birth, 'like everyone else' a 'nice person', Kierkegaard sought to proclaim the difficulty and scandalous nature of following Jesus Christ. Philosophically, Hegelianism was being perceived as the rational solution to the nature of the universe and the proof that Christianity was the most reasonable form of religion.

Hegelian rationalism viewed reality as an historical necessity which incorporated both God and humanity, leaving neither freedom. Christianity was for Hegel an interesting idea to be incorporated into a human philosophy. Kierkegaard attacked the alliance between bourgeois Christianity and the "System". He saw himself as on a divine mission - a knight of faith called to make Christianity difficult. His life work consists of an attempt to call his readers to take the successive leaps that will take them to the true Christian faith. To be a Christian is a radical and courageous thing, for it involves a way of life which places one in conflict with the created order. This transformation (metabasis eis allo genos) means a shift to another form of judgement where Christianity is seen differently, that is existentially.

##### B. The Absolute:

Contrary to Hegelian rationalism, only God can give us the categories by which he may be known. If, for example, Christ were to walk in Copenhagen today people would not recognise him because he would not fit their categories of 'God.' An infinite gulf

exists between God and man, between time and eternity, the finite and the infinite, between Absolute Substance and the nothingness of man.. God is “the absolutely unknown”, “the Limit”, “the sheerly unqualified Being”. There is a great chasm between the sinfulness of man and the holiness of God. To despair of oneself is a virtual precondition of faith. (Note the affinity with Lutheran Pietism her.) Apart from the uneasy conscience, a sense of sin and despair, one will never take the leap of faith which is trust in God alone, not even in his laws.

#### C. Jesus Christ:

The object of faith is not an idea that can be grasped by the human mind but the event of eternity entering into time, God becoming human in Jesus Christ. This event confronts us as the absolute paradox, which induces wonder but defies comprehension.

The infinite gulf has been bridged by God himself in the person of Jesus Christ. In opposition to the quest for the historical Jesus Kierkegaard diminishes the significance of historicity. (Where Hegel had located God and reason). The revelation of God in Jesus is a deliberately veiled one, in Jesus God appears incognito. Those living today are at no disadvantage to those living in Jesus' day. Factual vision does not necessarily lead to faith. The actualisation of the possibility of faith takes place only in the leap of faith. This is dependent now, as then, on revelation. "Now just as the historical gives occasion for the contemporary to become a disciple, but only it must be noted through receiving the condition from God himself.....so the testimony of contemporaries (Scripture) gives occasion for each successor to become a disciple, but only it must be noted through receiving the condition from God himself.". It is never an easy matter to become a disciple, it is not sufficient to be a Galilean fisherman in the first century, and it is not sufficient to be a Danish Lutheran in the nineteenth.

#### D. Analysis of Human Existence.

If we don't grasp the basic meaning of life we won't see the point of answers either. In Danish (as well as German) there are several words for “existence.” Kierkegaard chose a word which points to the uniqueness of human existence. This is so because humans can choose what they will be in the realm of self – conscious possibilities. This inner quality of choice he called ‘passion’, ‘subjectivity’ or ‘inwardness’. It entails a sense of unity and continuity in the life by deep commitment. Only through ‘passion’ can a person ‘truly become a self.’ Faith in God is the highest passion of existence.

#### E. Faith:

The opposite of sin is not virtue but faith. The laws of God are not identical to God, this is moralism, faith is directly related to God. Only by faith can we receive forgiveness. (Here Kierkegaard is close to Luther and opposed to both Kant and the rationalist tradition).

“Faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.” Faith is not rational but the acceptance of the absurd, (from the point of view of ‘merely human reason’ and speculative philosophy), of paradox. God is found at the boundary of reason. (This is in opposition to Roman Catholic and Protestant Orthodox definitions of faith.) It is a



personal decision, an act of affirmation, a leap into the dark. God may require one to act on the basis of a "teleological suspension of the ethical", as was the case with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, or of Kierkegaard's breaking of his own engagement. There is no outward evidence that this is an act of faith, it doesn't seem morally right. Such steps of personal commitment always involve risk. This is why it is always difficult to be a Christian.

D. Comments:

(a) Positively

- (i) Drew attention to the uniqueness of human existence.
- (ii) Drew attention to the discontinuity between history and faith, the ethical and the religious, nature and grace, God and man. (Kierkegaard vs Hegel. Cf. Cappadocians vs Origen, Barth vs Schleiermacher, viz. God is transcendent.
- (iii) Reminded theology that faith is not a virtue, and so theological ethics must be grounded in the doctrine of justification by faith.
- (iv) Reminded theology through the use of an existential dialectic and the language of paradox that there is mystery and transcendence in God at a time that rationalism and immanentism reigned supreme.

(b) Negatively

- (i) Exaggerated individualism - ignores the context of faith amidst the people of God and the social dimensions of sin.
- (ii) Underplays the role of grace in leading to faith. It is the love of God in Christ which awakens faith.
- (iii) Sees grace as annulling creature and culture rather than restoring and renewing it. (Hence his pessimism about cultural pursuits.)
- (iv) Underplays the significance of the image of God in man.
- (v) Over-emphasises the non-rational side of faith. God is found not at the boundary of reason but in the crisis of history where God becomes human in Jesus Christ. The hearing of faith is a rational event, reason is turned around rather than being crucified. In faith we make contact not with nothing but with the Logos.
- (vi) Never completely free from the classical view of God as immutable and self contained. God's Holy Love is a Christian conception, a featureless Absolute Substance is a rival concept of God.

### 3. RUDOLPH BULTMANN (1884-1976)

#### A. Introduction:

In terms of influence Bultmann is certainly the most influential New Testament theologian of the twentieth century. Like Barth, Bultmann came to the conclusion that the biblical theology of the nineteenth century had come to a dead end. Unlike Barth he did not distance himself from the historical-critical method of biblical studies, but sought through this method to interpret the gospel in a way which was comprehensible to the modern mind. This led him on the one side to a more radical approach to the concepts of the New Testament than had been adopted before and on the other side to an uncritical use of the existentialist categories of the atheist philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

#### B. God and the World.

God is the supreme 'I' 'infinitely' and 'qualitatively' transcendent of the created order. As such God is an unknown Cause of identifiable effects, the closed world of cause and effect revealed to us by modern science. God's relationship with the world is dialectical, he relates to us tangentially. God is never an object. This is the basic principle underlying all Bultmann's' thought. To speak, for example, of 'the law of God' would be to speak of norms of good, beauty etc. embodied in human nature.

#### C. Kerygma and Myth.

"It is impossible to use electric light and wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles."

Bultmann felt that Liberal Protestantism had sidestepped the problem of myth in the New Testament. It had recognised the presence of pre-philosophical and pre-scientific modes of thought in the Gospels, but these did not touch the (ethical) kernel of the gospel as proclaimed by Jesus. The problem of miracles could be ignored since Jesus himself attached no critical significance to his miracles. Myth is a pre-scientific conceptualisation of reality, being non-abstract it doesn't understand causes. Explanation is in terms of the interaction of the natural and the supernatural in a 3-tiered cosmos inhabited by angels and demons. Since theology is a human and not divine work, Bultmann saw historical – critical study as essential. Not to get some objective truth in history, but to peel off the historical forms of expression. To present God "as such" would be to be mythologize, viz to adopt an objective phenomenology.

Bultmann applied the new techniques of "form criticism" to the Gospels. This was an attempt to identify the small units of traditional material according to the "forms" or "shape" they have assumed in the pre-literary stage before Gospel writing. Examples are controversy-stories, miracle-stories, legends, myths and exhortations. Bultmann concludes that the stories of the Gospels are the product of the life and faith of the early Church.

More particularly the gospel proclamation (*kerygma*) is expressed through myth. It is embodied in the mythical language of the New Testament. John is the most consistently existential in his approach to Jesus. "Jesus is not presented as a pre-existent divine being who came in human form to reveal unprecedented secrets." There is in John no metaphysics of the person of the redeemer, the revelation of Jesus is that he is the Revealer. What is important is that Jesus brings words from beyond, from God. Nothing is known of Jesus other than that he is the one who makes salvation from God possible: only the *Dass* ("that") not the *Was* ("what").

To discard the myth is to discard the gospel. On these grounds Bultmann rejected the old liberal attempt to separate the "Jesus of history" from the "Christ of faith". This was impossible and led to talk of God as a space-time object, as if faith's validity could depend upon the results of historical and scientific investigation. It could not be, for example, that the discovery of a set of bones in the garden tomb would invalidate the reality of the resurrection. Faith and history are only paradoxically related.

The solution was to locate the gospel not in past history but in the *kerygma* itself. Faith does not arise out of the results of historical research but is formed by a personal confrontation with Christ in the *kerygma*. There is no revelation in a reality outside of us; the New Testament is a prolegomenon to change in my consciousness.

Since we can no longer accept the first century world view nor reject the myth without destroying the gospel, the way forward is to demythologise the *kerygma* - that is, not to eliminate the myth, but to interpret it. As the real purpose of myth is to express man's self-understanding of himself in the world the task of demythologising is to present the gospel in existential terms. By stripping off the mythical first century form and replacing it with one which will anchor me in the present the result is an authentic existence.

#### D. Existentialism and the Gospel.

The criterion for determining the truth of myth is "the understanding of human existence which the New Testament itself enshrines." Only in existential forms can this truth be expressed in a way which is comprehensible to twentieth century man. This is not just an apologetic device, but a way of speaking about God non-mythologically. Consistent with his rejection of all attempts to objectify God theological statements are possible only when they are anthropological statements ..." if a man will speak of God, he must evidently speak of himself." Since God is never object, in meeting with God we have no object, and therefore find only ourselves addressed as the other's object. God is there only as a *word*, that calls me to abandon all security. Heidegger in his existential categories is saying the same thing as the New Testament.

According to Heidegger each person has a unique existence, being thrown into existence at a certain point in space and time. Existence occurs in each moment of time (only) and its character is determined by individual decisions. A self is not a rational mind, nor the world something "beyond" us. (Existentialism typically attempts to break down the subject – object distinction.) This distinguishes "existence" from the "world". People develop an "authentic existence" when they accept the challenge of being thrown into the world, especially in the face of certain future death. "Inauthentic

existence" is acceptance of the average, the typical and the "worldly". We are always being confronted with a decision to 'lose' ourselves in the past constituted by the inner or outer world, or to become a new self.

An existential reading of the New Testament mirrors the eschatological character of the *kerygma*. I exist in the decisions posed by every temporal encounter; I exist in decision. What I finally choose is precisely to choose: to be free from the past and to be open to the indeterminate future.

Bultmann equated the categories of "inauthentic" and "authentic" with sin and faith. Authentic human being is "eschatological existence", the surrender of all security. God is the "Insecurity of the future", the Coming One whose deity is his constant futurity. As I am confronted by the *kerygma* with its message of the crucified and risen Lord I am challenged to respond by faith and so understand myself as crucified and risen with Christ, to 'perish and become' One's 'destiny is decided with reference to his (Jesus) person'. This occurs in the present, which is the only locus of revelation. The *kerygma* relates the themes of self understanding and actualise a new understanding. In this act the past event (history) and the present fulfilment of faith cannot be separated, viz. the subject – object revelation is eliminated. This is an eschatological event which separates me from the world. In it my life becomes meaningful. For example, the resurrection of Jesus is the coming to faith of the first disciples.

#### E. Comments:

##### (a) Positively

- (i) Exposed the inconsistencies of the old liberal theology by his radically consistent use of higher criticism.
- (ii) Reminded the church that all attempts to objectify God are idolatrous. (cf. Barth)
- (iii) Reminded the church of the constant need to re-express the gospel in categories which are intelligible to each generation.

##### (b) Negatively

- (i) Bultmann's own world – view is based on an antiquated scientific world – view (Newtonian).
- (ii) Ignores the fact that the early Christians required a conflict between the gospel and the prevailing world – view.
- (iii) Simplified the diverse literature of the New Testament, especially overlooking its claim to historicity. The Johannine Jesus for example is the fulfilment of all the Old testament institutions of Tabernacle, purification, Temple and so on. He has the highest christological evaluation for the readers of the gospel.
- (iv) Allowed the categories of existentialism to dominate his interpretation of the New Testament. Bultmann's position is an intellectual form of docetism (Barth).
- (v) Generalised the difficulties "modern man" has with the supernatural.

- (vi) 'Through the Spirit we are converted from ourselves to thinking from a centre in God and not in ourselves, and to knowing God out of God and not of ourselves'.(T.F. Torrance.) This is the opposite to Bultmann's approach.
- (vii)Privatised faith. "God's great drama has become an 'existentialist private performance' "Ignores the social and political dimensions of the gospel. Even God is reduced to: 'what he means for me.'"
- (viii)Relegates God-in-himself to the unknowable realm of the *noumena*.

In terms of his own philosophy of the infinite qualitative difference (dialectical relationship) between God and humans, Jesus represents a qualitative construction of God's significance for humans and the world. This is a contradiction within Bultmann's system.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 7A: THE EXISTENTIALISTS (2)

#### 1. PAUL TILLICH (1886-1965)

##### A. Introduction:

Paul Tillich was a German philosopher and theologian whose most important teaching was done in the United States. He came to be one of the most influential theologians of the '50s and '60s, but unlike Barth his prominence did not survive his death, at least beyond the USA. Tillich saw himself as the mediator of the eternal truths of Christianity to the worldly intellectuals of his day. In this he followed in the steps of the great Liberal Protestants, such as Schleiermacher.

##### B Theological Method:

Tillich's "apologetic theology" sought to avoid the error of orthodoxy which tended to throw an ancient message at a contemporary culture. His purpose was to be achieved by the "method of correlation". He is a theologian of culture as well as of the church. In contrast to the Neo-Orthodox tradition: "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the God of the philosophers is the same God." The symbols of Christianity correlate with those of human being. Philosophy's task is to formulate questions of "ultimate concern" (that which demands total commitment); theology's role is to understand these questions and provide adequate responses. Thus philosophy is indispensable for theology. For Tillich philosophy is virtually synonymous with ontology, the study of being, especially existential ontology. Ontological questions are raised about what something *is*.

The answers to the questions of philosophy are proffered by revelatory experience, by the events in which the Mystery that antecedently moves the questions make itself manifest as the one that has done so. This is neither the imposition of a heteronomy, nor an autonomy, but pointing to a theonomy in which culture is fulfilled in the divine life. In this way the power of the eternal message is manifested in the current situation. For Tillich today's questions are not metaphysical but existential, that is, questions about what it means to be human. These were asked by the culture in the existential void of the post World War 2 years.

##### C. God:

God is the answer to the question implied in human being. "God" is the religious symbol for the Ground of being and the Ground of meaning. The only literal statement about God is that he is being itself.

"God does not exist . He is being itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore to argue that God exists is to deny him". Conversely, "I was gripped by the paradox that anyone who seriously denies God is, in fact, affirming him." God does not exist because existence is a category of dependence. God is the power of being, the ground of being who is always present in our lives as the Power that maintains us against non – being and meaninglessness. This was Tillich's attempt to express the transcendence of God beyond the efforts of classical theism to understand him. This is a God beyond the God of theism. God does not participate in "existence" like other beings, for if he did he would be subject to limitation and could not be the object of an ultimate concern. Because God is absolute, infinite, free and unconditioned nothing can be said about him that is not purely symbolic except that he is being-itself. God, for example may be encountered as personal but as the ground of everything personal he cannot be a person. The Ground nevertheless is Life, in the interplay between being and meaning. For Tillich the eternal dimension of what happens in the universe is the divine life itself. God could not be God without the world. Deity as such is not determined by the story of Israel or Jesus. Life is not peculiar to Christianity

#### D. Sin

Sin must be interpreted as existential estrangement. This is implied in the biblical and theological symbols of the Fall. Man's sin is rooted in the separation of existence from essence, in the split of subject and object. The "original fact" about humankind is that it has chosen to be divided from the ground of its being, and so is thrust into loneliness and despair, anxiety and guilt. Man is now a divided being. This separation is inevitable condition of our being, not just a product of our will. Unbelief means that the centre of self has been removed from the ground of being, pride is the elevation of self to become its own centre.

It is like the 'ontological shock' of the onslaught of non-being, present in the modern age in the form of meaninglessness, which raises the question of being (God). (cf. ancient world-fate and death, Reformation – guilt and condemnation.)

#### E. Revelation:

"Revelation is the answer to the questions implied in the existential conflicts of reason". It is the manifestation of our ultimate concern and so the solution to the intractable predicaments in which reason finds itself. "Reason does not resist revelation . It asks for revelation, for revelation means the regeneration of reason." Revelation does not consist in the impartation of information in the form of propositional truths but "the manifestation of the ground of being for human knowledge." In the experience of revelation reason is taken beyond its subject-object structure into "ecstasy". Wherever the depth of being manifests itself we have "the Word of God". The "Word of God' is God manifest. This can mean God as the source of the Word, the medium of creation, the history of revelation, the manifestation in the life of Jesus the Christ, the scriptures as the final documents of revelation, and the preaching and teaching of the church.

It is therefore illegitimate to equate the Bible with the Word of God. The Bible however "participates" in revelation as the document which records the result of final

revelation in Jesus the Christ. The Bible functions like an expressionist portrait of Jesus, linking (glimpses of) the Jesus of history with the present. The biblical picture functions as a symbol of being to produce the New Being.

#### F. Jesus Christ:

All human beings seek an escape from this state of estrangement by being reunited with our essence. This reunion is the "New Being". The New Being has appeared as the final revelation of God in the person of Jesus the Christ. Jesus is the final revelation in the sense that as the Christ he is the criterion of all other revelation. In overcoming all estrangement Jesus restored the unity between God and man. This is not a matter of the contingent historical claims of a "historicist" approach of reality; for example, the bearer of the New Being could have been someone other than Jesus, perhaps Mark. (Tillich's approach is "presentist". This phenomenological approach to ontological structuring make history irrelevant. Christology is free from falsification because it is free from the contingencies of history.) On these terms the historical features of Jesus' life are incidental. ("I am not interested in ghost stories.") The crucifixion and resurrection are symbols which "show the New Being in Jesus as the Christ as victorious over the existential estrangement to which he has subjected himself." The resurrection is not a physical, spiritualistic (soul survival) or psychological event in the consciousness of the disciples. Resurrection is restitution: "in an ecstatic experience the concrete picture of Jesus of Nazareth became indissolubly united with the reality of the New Being." Thus Jesus is permanently associated with the concept of the New Being, and this is resurrection. Jesus is the bearer of the New Being, not its focus. The symbol of "Jesus as the Christ" is what effects openness to the Ground of being. Jesus' words and deeds are illustrations of his being. Jesus is never estranged from the ground of his being – whether in the anxiety of Gethsemane or the tragedy of the cross. His death is a sacrifice for the sake of universality (cf. self-centredness) of New Being.

#### G. The Christian Life:

Tillich's Christology is a function of his soteriology, of the experience of those who experience healing in the spiritual community that develops after Jesus and on to our present, 'Christ could not be Christ without those who receive him as Christ.' The New Being is the power of salvation that liberates and transforms us so that we participate in the new creation. This comes as a sheer gift. "Reconciliation, reunion, resurrection - this is the New Creation, the New Being, the New state of things....a New state of things has appeared, it still appears; it is hidden and visible, it is there and it is here. Accept it, enter into it, let it grasp you."

This is expressed in paradoxical terms: doubting the meaning of life is an expression of life's meaning, the experience of separation from God is an expression of his presence, even protest against God is a hidden demonstration of God. (Atheism is impossible by definition.)



The risk of faith is based on the fact that the unconditional message element can become a matter of ultimate concern only if it appears in a concrete embodiment, that is, Jesus as the Christ.

#### H. Comments:

- (1) The 'pervasive ambiguity' of Tillich's language means: 'it is possible to... read one's own meanings into his words and thus be hypnotized into finding great comforts in oases which are only mirages.' (Alan Richardson.)
- (2) Tillich is not actually a theist in classical, or biblical, terms. He holds 'a self-transcending or ecstatic naturalism.' This is clear when he says of prayer: 'we can only pray to the God who prays to himself through us,' or in his redefinition of justification by faith: 'the accepting of the acceptance without somebody or something that accepts'. The abstract neutral language of "being" obscures the profoundly personal nature of salvation.
- (3) God is a solution (merely) to a human problem, viz. the correlate of the anxiety about finitude. As a philosophical response to culture Tillich's system is more an expression of the modern mind than a challenge to it.
- (4) Barth accuses Tillich of a "far too cheap universalism". he sees in Tillich's words a "faith and revelation steamroller" flattening everything, house, humans, and animals. This harmonization is not like the world of separation which confronts us, it tries to save people without anything needing to happen in their lives.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 7 A : THE EXISTENTIALISTS (3)

#### 1. INTRODUCTION TO SECULAR THEOLOGY:

In Western culture the 1960s were a time of deep disturbance, it was as if everything was open to question, including all past theological achievements. In particular, two powerful forces were at work to produce a dialectical tension in a new generation. On the one hand there was deep scepticism due to the failure of the older generation to avoid war and especially the ongoing threat of nuclear annihilation. All external authority - state, church, family - was challenged. On the other hand there was a new optimism due to the explosion of technology, knowledge and standards of living. The rising company of theologians were deeply affected by the secularisation of popular culture. God has lost his functions one by one, even those who formally remain Christians might devote a few minutes a day to Bible reading and prayer, but for the rest of the day they live much like the rest. How were Christians to respond to the colossal disasters of Hiroshima, Auschwitz ( and later, Vietnam).

These theologians found in Bonhoeffer a prophet and interpreter of the increasing marginalisation of religion in all spheres of existence. There was a strong movement away from Barth's emphasis on the utter transcendence of God and an embracing of existentialist categories of theologians like Bultmann and Tillich. Theologians such as William Hamilton and Thomas Altizer began to speak of the "death of God", the experience of the absence of God. God was absolutely immanent in humanity, this spelled full liberation from all alienating powers. Altizer saw the death of God as his intention from the beginning. In Jesus God surrendered himself to world history so that , in becoming human, God ceased to be God. God's love is now identical with love for our fellow humans. The separation and competition between love for God and love for others, as, say, in the situation in religious South Africa, need no longer continue. We have now reached a point in the history of God's continuing incarnation at which the incarnation must be radically promoted, so that the *Jenseits* (the beyond) can be wholly absorbed in the *Diesseits* (this reality). When this is achieved no transcendent Father remains on the horizon, temporal history is the place where everything occurs. This point is the moment of the "death" of God.

Although technically this was not a revival of the old Liberal Protestantism it shared with it elements such as individualism, a denial of supernatural intervention in history and a rejection of the final authority of Scripture.

### 3-2. J.A.T.ROBINSON:

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#### A. "Honest to God"

In 1963 the Anglican Bishop of Woolwich John Robinson published a book titled "Honest to God" which created a storm in the English speaking world. Robinson's aim was to popularise the writings of those theologians whose categories of thought seemed intelligible to the secular society of the day. He saw this as both a necessary expression of personal honesty and the only means to stem the flow of people away from a faith in God.

#### B. God

Robinson saw himself as part of a reluctant revolution similar to that forced on the world by Copernicus. In this age we can no longer speak as the Bible does of a God who is "up there" or "out there". This is a mental picture of God that is an unnecessary stumbling block to belief in the Gospel. God, in Bonhoeffer's terms, is calling us to live without him. God is not a projection "out there" but, following Tillich, "the ground of our being". "The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God". That depth is what the word God means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without reservation.....For you cannot think or say: Life has no depth! Life is shallow. Being is surface only. If you could say this in complete seriousness, you would be an atheist; but otherwise you are not" (Tillich). With Bultmann we must abandon supranaturalism, for God is not "out there". Yet we cannot accept its opposite, naturalism, with its materialistic and mechanistic assumptions. We are to think of God in a non-religious way, (so, Bonhoeffer) - in particular the divine transcendence is no longer credible. We find God by immersing ourselves in existence, especially personal relationships; for theological affirmations are assertions about human life (Bultmann). This does not mean that God is to be identified with the world (pantheism) but is to be recognised in the depth and self transcendence of our being. So, God is to be met, not by a "religious" turning away from the world but in an unconditional concern for "the other" seen through to its ultimate depths.

#### C. Jesus Christ

The above framework means we must abandon the traditional metaphysical statement (Chalcedon) concerning the person of Christ. A supranaturalistic view of Jesus cannot be sustained from the New Testament. Rather we are to understand Jesus as the only human being who was completely a "man for others," as such he was fully united with the ground of his being, God, in pure love. This makes Jesus the final revelation of God. In following Jesus we are led to "heaven", in living in estrangement with God we are living in "hell". The grace of the gospel is to be expressed in Tillichian terms "simply accept the fact that you are accepted".

#### D. The Christian Life

Robinson worked out these perspectives consistently with respect to what it means to be a Christian. God is found in engaging the world, not in separation from it. In giving ourselves to people we are entering intercession and allowing God into the relationship. This is the "holy worldliness" promoted by Bonhoeffer. In Augustine's words, "Love God and do what you like" constitutes the heart of Christian prayer. So Robinson went on to embrace the new morality of "situation ethics" promoted by Joseph Fletcher. There are no universal principles to guide behaviour, the only absolute is to love in each concrete circumstance of life. This frees us from the externalism of legalism to live a life of faith. In all this the Church exists for the world.

#### E. Comments

- (a) The idea of a competition between love for God and love for neighbour is a false one. The whole of God's will as revealed in Jesus is found in the two great commandments together.
- (b) To confine salvation to an adequate life and prosperity in the present is to ignore that this is realisable only eschatologically.
- (c) The notion of the death of God, in terms of his absence is not a new problem. The psalmists struggle with this situation (Pss 10:1; 13:1; 42:9; 88:14). This is a theme found elsewhere in the Old Testament (Isa 45:5; 64:1; Lam 3:8). These believers however called on God to undo this experience of absence, and found that it could be due to their sin and his wrath (Ps 30:6 – 7; Deut 31: 16 – 17; Isa 59: 1- 3; Ezek 39:23 -24; Mic 3:4). In working these issues through the faithful found not despair but relief (Ps 32: 1- 4; 44; 88). Even when a clear answer was not given faith was sustained. This is summed up and exemplified in the cross, where Jesus, despite the experience of the absence of God, still clings to God in the words of Psalm 22:1.

Since the death of God theologians calmly proceeded to construct a theology of his disappearance, they could not experience renewal in the living God.

Secular Christianity proved to be a dead end. Non - Christian thinkers failed to see the need to engage with the new form of the old moribund liberalism. It lacked the power to motivate and renew the Church which continued in decline.

## **COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY**

### **WEEK 7 B: SOCIAL THEOLOGY**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION:**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century various theologians became intensely aware of the social problems attendant on unrestrained capitalism. Their roots lay on the revivalist tradition of personal holiness and social reform; this was increasingly combined with the scientific study of social problems. They perceived that the growing urban slums with their attendant vice were not simply the result of individual sin but also of economic and social injustice. The earlier phase of this movement known as the "social gospel" ranks as one of the most significant contributions of the United States to Christian thought. It represented a loosely organised coalition from about 1880 to the start of the Great Depression (1929).

#### **2. WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH (1861-1918)**

##### **A. The Social Dimension of the Gospel.**

Contemporary Protestantism was criticised for being too individualistic and too little concerned with practical social service. The social gospel claimed to be "the old message of salvation, but enlarged and intensified", believing not only individuals but also the institutions of human society to be redeemable. Thy its proponents saw this as being in continuity with Old Testament prophetic denunciation of social callousness and the New Testament injunctions concerning mammon. They sought to bring about repentance for collective sins, and to locate a middle ground between "an unsocial system of theology and an irreligious system of social salvation". It is necessary for the fruits of salvation to be seen in the social sphere.

"Social religion ...demands ...repentance for our social sins: faith is the possibility of a new social order. As long as a man sees in our present society only a few inevitable abuses and recognises not sin and evil deep seated in the very constitution of the present order, he is still in a state of moral blindness and without conviction of sin. Those who believe in a better social order are often told that they do not know the sinfulness of the human heart. They could justly retort the charge on the men of the evangelical school."

Social problems cannot be solved by mere philanthropy nor by the conversion of one individual after another. The very order of society, its laws and institutions, must be affected by the gospel in order to provide a more just environment for human life. We must ask: 'What would Jesus do?'

##### **B. The Kingdom of God.**

Rauschenbusch was deeply influenced by Ritschl's moral interpretation of the Kingdom of God. This is a collective notion which was at the heart of the ethical system of Jesus. It is the only alternative to the greedy ethics of capitalism and militarism. Being a Christian in the midst of social crisis means working for the salvation of the economic structures that perpetuate poverty. The essential Christian task is not so

much to abolish drunkenness and adultery, but "to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconciling them in accordance with the will of God." Although progressive this was no idealistic programme, for the Kingdom of God is vigorously opposed by the Kingdom of evil.

#### C. Criticism of the churches

In the absence of the social dimensions of the gospel the churches are without a prophetic witness. They breed only priests and theologians and degenerate into structures focussed on self - preservation. The Church has power to save only to the extent that the Kingdom of God is active within it.

#### D. Comments.

In the aftermath of World War I the "social gospel " was eclipsed by the kerygmatic theology of Neo-Orthodoxy. It tended to be somewhat simplistically equated with the older liberalism; it did have for example cross links with the Salvation Army. Despite obvious deficiencies many of its themes have been revived in the reconsideration of social justice issues since the 1970s.

### 3. REINHOLD NIEBUHR (1892 - 1971)

#### A. Introduction

Niebuhr was perhaps the most influential American theologian of the second quarter of the twentieth century. Beginning with the premises (utopian) of Liberal Protestantism that science and education would lead to endless progress, his experience of the car industry in Detroit taught him "the irrelevance of the mild moralistic idealism, which I had identified with the Christian faith, to the power realities of our modern technical society". Henceforth he plunged himself into the work of theological ethics and apologetic theology with particular concentration on the relationship of Christian thought to the social problems of contemporary capitalistic culture. He sought to fashion a 'practical theology' which put force a defence, justification and argument for the relevance of the Christian faith in a secular culture.

From another angle, his theological framework may appropriately be termed 'neo-orthodox.' Niebuhr saw himself primarily as an ethicist, rather than a systematic theologian.

#### B. Moral Man and Immoral Society

This was the title of Niebuhr's first major book (1932) and it was a sustained attack on naive optimistic liberalism, the evolutionary millennialism of the privileged classes. In this period he used Marxist tools of social analysis; political morality was essentially about the presentation of power, primarily expressed through ownership of the means of production. As the outcome of the Russian revolution became patent (oligarchy) he

came to see Marxism as an apocalyptic and “religious” ideology towards which he was increasingly critical.

In this book a sharp distinction was drawn between the moral and social behaviour of individuals and social groups. Human societies are even more susceptible to unrestrained egoism than are individuals. (They crucify their rebels as anti-social.) Individuals are restrained by reason and conscience, being moved to mercy and considerateness. At the level of class or society, however, greater arrogance, hypocrisy and self-centredness arises. Prejudice and patriotism express a ruthlessness of seemingly irreconcilable perspectives. At the social level there is far less capacity for self-transcendence. Unselfishness is an adequate ideal for the inner life, but the ideal for social life must be justice. This is a matter of what people deserve. Niebuhr gave a priority to justice over love at this point for he thought the latter to be too dependent on emotions. The complexity of modern society called for careful ethical calculations. Love however was a fundamental motive, for which justice could function as an instrument in a world where love was defied. Justification by faith in the realm of justice means that we will not regard the pressures and counter pressures, the tensions, the overt, and the covert conflicts by which justice is achieved and maintained, as normative in the absolute sense; but neither will we ease our conscience by seeking to escape from involvement in them’. There is in Niebuhr’s view of Christianity an incipient theology of its function as a liberator for involvement in the structures of society.

Christians have been too ineffective in the world because they have fallen prey to the moralistic illusions of the middle class. “Christian realism” saw love not as a simple historical possibility but as an impossible possibility. In this book Niebuhr called for a move to the right in theology, towards Neo-Orthodoxy, and a move to the left in politics, towards socialism. The Kingdom of God does not come by human action in history, but from beyond it. As a transcendent ideal it stands over history as an unattainable ideal, judging our pride and reminding us that there is in history no ultimate security.

### C. Sin

‘Man has always been his own most vexing problem. How shall he think of himself?’  
The Nature and Destiny of Man, I, p.1).

In his search for an adequate foundation for ethical judgements Niebuhr moved increasingly towards the classical Christian, and especially Augustinian, view of the doctrine of original sin. The fundamental error of liberalism was its rejection of Christian anthropology. The genius of the Christian doctrine of original sin was to assert both the inevitability of sin, generated by anxiety at finitude, cf. Kierkegaard, and man’s responsibility, but not in such a way as to fit into the category of natural necessity. Sin is natural because universal, proceeding from a defect in the will. Sin is the misuse of finite human freedom, instead of the capacity for self-transcendence being used to love God as a creature should, it becomes an adventure in self-sufficiency and self-mastery. Here Niebuhr adopts personal and historical rather than anthropological categories. Niebuhr ‘existentialised’ Augustine, by removing his genetic-physical emphasis. The human “spirit” is our capacity to stand outside of self and the world, to decide without necessity, to be more than rational. (Otherwise reason

is deified and God becomes a principle of meaning.) The Fall is a descent into egocentricity, the rejection of the creatureliness. Human beings now take pride in power, knowledge and virtue. The human problem is not how the finite may know the infinite as in Greek epistemology, but how sinful people can be reconciled to God. Faith is the opposite of sin because by accepting our creaturely dependence on the providence of God we affirm his place as Creator. This looking to the transcendent God of history is the freeing of the self's centring on itself, and it is to such a life that a Christian is called.

#### D. Myth

Niebuhr opposed the historical - literalistic attempt to understand man and his sin. In opposition to liberalism the myths of Christianity cannot be discarded, in favour of science or philosophy. They are permanent and not 'pre-scientific' (versus Bultmann) Since the point of contact between God and humanity is personality ("spirit") the language of the Bible must be interpreted in terms of personal analogies. The return of Jesus symbolizes the sufficiency of God and the final supremacy of love, the resurrection signifies that the transition to eternity will fulfill and not annul, the last judgement points to the ultimate distinction between good and evil.

The "dramatic - historical" perspective of the Bible, which can often be articulated through tortuous paradoxes and difficult symbols, provides a "truer view of both the nobility and the misery of man than all the wisdom of scientists and philosophers." In opposition to orthodoxy the transcendent centre of human life (God) cannot be captured in linear-temporal categories. We are not dealing with a demonstrated ontology but a dialectic of time and eternity. As eternity cannot be captured in time it can only be expressed symbolically. Historical events can only be occasions for the disclosure of transcendent meaning, visible to faith. The function of myth is to speak of the eternal in relation to time. The story of the Fall, for example, is not about an event in natural history but about human decision making on a universal scale. Adam and Eve are symbolic expressions of a relationship subsisting timelessly between the human person and God, but rooted in the corporate historical experience of the human race. Myth operates at a level of meaning verifiable in experience, in pointing us to the eternal it refers to the ultra-rational hope of just society.

#### E. The Cross

In keeping with his principles of interpretation, Niebuhr moved away both from the liberal rejection of the doctrine of the atonement as a stumbling block to the modern mind and the orthodox emphasis on mere historical fact. The atonement is beyond rational analysis. The cross is the central revelatory event because it breaks through the moral ambiguity in which all history participates. It is the sudden emergence of the absolutely transcendent in history, that which is relevant to every social situation. It proclaims both the suffering divine love and God's judgement upon sin. It reveals the depth of our self-contradiction and the reality that we cannot provide our own meaning. By taking the evil of the human heart and human history into itself the cross shows that the ultimate victory belongs to the divine love. It reveals the relation of the divine to human history, pointing to the judgement and mercy of God as the fulfillment of



history. In the light of the cross and its judgement on us, the meaning of our history is made plain.

#### F. Comments

Niebuhr's theological position is somewhat difficult to define. Unlike Barth he saw many points of contact between the divine and the human, eternity and time, and so was able to embrace the category of myth as a way to elucidate human existence. Unlike Bultmann, Niebuhr did not explicitly descend into an a-historical individualism, reminiscent in its own way of the old bourgeois liberalism, for his main focus was a pragmatic social concern. His failure however to restrict the category of myth to certain limited portions of the Bible meant that the break with subjectivity was never clean. Here he remains a child of the Enlightenment. Niebuhr's theology lacks the transcendent dimension of reality so important in the Scriptures whereby God breaks in "from above" transforming history into salvation history; the death and resurrection of Jesus actually do something. In this regard both his doctrine of the Word and of the Spirit are impoverished. Niebuhr's failure to develop an adequate theology of the Holy Spirit means that sin is only overcome 'in principle', and not 'in fact'. The simul justus et peccator, needs to be complemented by the presence of Christ through the Spirit as the sphere in which sin begins to be outgrown. Overall, the impression is of a lop-sided theology with a strong emphasis on the sinfulness of sin but little awareness of the power of God to transform the human situation. 'Religion is a citadel of hope built on the edge of despair.' Life is a struggle for the unattainable.

The lack of a Trinitarian depth to anthropology means inevitably that Niebuhr's theology lacks an adequately churchly dimension and remains individualistic.

## COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### WEEK 8 : CONSERVATIVE THEOLOGY

#### A. EVANGELICALISM

##### 1. The Meaning of "Evangelical"

- (a) Greek *evangelion* = "good news"  
Evangelist, evangelical = bearer of good news of Christ.
- (b) Evangelical in Europe can mean "Protestant" Churches which base their teaching pre-eminently on the "Gospel"
- (c) "Evangelical" in Germany and Switzerland = Lutheran as contrasted to Reformed. (Calvinist)
- (d) "Evangelical" in the Church of England means a church party distinct from the "high church" or "liberal". Originates in the 18th Century Evangelical revival, especially with George Whitefield. (Methodists separated from Church of England.) Later leaders include John Newton (1725-1807), Charles Simeon (1759-1836), Henry Martyn (1781-1812), William Wilberforce (1759-1833), 7th Earl of Shaftesbury (1801-1885), W.H. Griffith Thomas (1861-1924), J.R.W. Stott, J.I. Packer, A. McGrath. Emphasis is upon simplicity in liturgy, personal conversion, salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ, primacy of preaching, authority of Scripture.
- (e) "Evangelical" in a wider non-denominational, international sense means those who have espoused and experienced justification and scriptural authority in an intensified way: personal conversion, moral vigour, Bible study, evangelism. Anabaptism, Puritanism, Wesleyanism, European pietism, converts of the American Great Awakening, and all their heirs represent variations of these themes.
- (f) "Evangelicalism" in the twentieth century expresses itself in various sub - communities:
  - (1) "old evangelicals" - exponents of the life of personal piety.  
Stress upon the conversion experience and its evocation in either mass evangelism or individual witness, strict standards of personal morality and disciplined biblical study. eg. Billy Graham.
  - (2) "new evangelicals" in the USA this was a reaction to the perceived separatist individualistic and unscholarly features of Fundamentalism. Rose to prominence after W.W.II. Foundation of various institutions: National Association of Evangelicals (1942), Fuller Seminary (1947) 'Christianity Today' (1956). There is an emphasis on the rational defence of the faith and an attempt to relate piety to

social issues.

eg. Carl F. Henry (Fundamentalism lacks a world-view), Gordon H. Clark. (Fundamentalism is negative and isolationist), E.J. Carnell (Fundamentalism is orthodoxy gone cultic and non-creedal), F.F. Bruce, Klaas Runia, John Stott, Leon Morris, Colin Brown, Don Carson, M. Noll, A. McGrath.

- (3) Justice and Peace Evangelicals: - sometimes referred to as "young evangelicals". First became vocal in the mid 1970s. Influenced by the social theology of Jaques Ellul, the Anabaptist tradition via J.H. Yoder and so on. Representatives include Jim Wallis and Ronald Sider. They call for a more radical critique of the systems and practices of oppression and war. Sometimes form intentional communities to care for the poor and needy.

## 2. Evangelical Essentials

- (a) The Authority of Scripture: Scripture holds the place of primary authority in all matters of faith and conduct. The Bible is the final court of appeal. Proclaim the sufficiency, perspicuity and normativity of Holy Scripture. Tends to 'biblicism', viz fragmentary collection of segments of scripture cf. Reformation and 17<sup>th</sup> century confessions. Some evangelicals define inerrancy and infallibility in terms of the goal of Scripture, viz. salvation. Scripture is definitive in faith and morals and not so in cosmologies and chronologies. This leaves scope for historical tradition criticism. Others emphasise 'verbal inspiration.'
- (b) Emphasis on personal experience: regeneration and conversion, personal holiness.
- (c) Crucicentrism: focus on the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement; Jesus' death provides the only way of salvation.
- (d) Missionary minded: all Christians called to witness to their faith, Church called to take the gospel to the whole world.

## 3. Other Theological Issues.

- (a) The Doctrine of God: Follows the historic confessions of traditional orthodoxy. Variations in emphases eg. role of general revelation, attributes and sovereignty of God, represent historical differences.
- (b) The Doctrine of Creation: Agreement on the fact of absolute creation, *ex nihilo*, as the beginning of the universe. Disagreement over the compatibility of the theory of evolution with Christianity. Some concepts include "theistic evolution" and

"scientific creationism". In the end this comes down not to a question of biblical authority but is hermeneutical ie. what type of literature is Genesis 1-2?

- (c) The Doctrine of Man: Differ in terms of human composition, dichotomist or trichotomist, the origin of the immaterial part of humanity, creationist or traducianist, the matter of free will.
- (d) The Role of Women: Divided over the place of women in the home and in the church. Hierarchical versus egalitarian. Again the difference is hermeneutical and exegetical.
- (e) The Ecumenical Movement: Some parts of evangelicalism share in matters of common concern with "ecumenical" Christians, others view this as compromise.
- (f) Eschatology: broad range of evangelical opinion. Historic-premillennial, dispensational; pre-millennial; - amillennial, postmillennial. Some have embraced a conditional immortality or annihilationist position.

#### 4. Comments.

##### (a) Positively:

- i Adhere to all historic doctrines of the Christian faith.
- ii Strong doctrine of Holy Scripture.
- iii Emphasis on holiness of life.
- iv Commitment to personal evangelism.
- v Commitment to scholarship.
- vi Recognition of the need for social justice.

##### (b) Negatively

- i Tendency to division: given to voluntarism (personal choice)
- ii Tendency to individualism and "pietism" e.g. "quiet time." Modern Evangelicalism, has been criticised for being a child of the Enlightenment, influenced by the cultural climate – Descartes, Pietism, Schleiermacher, existentialism, all of which emphasise the human subject, cf. for example, covenant theology.
- iii Tendency to a poor aesthetics; often holds to a weak doctrine of creation and hence creativity (arts).
- iv Tendency to promote and so produce simplistic explanations.
- v Tendency to reduce the role of the Church and the sacraments (post 19<sup>th</sup> century).  
Congregation as association of free individuals, rather than a body or family.

- vi Tendency to "dead - orthodoxy" and legalism, e.g. authority of K.J.V.
- vii Tendency to de-emphasise the role of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. This follows an aversion to forms; learning the patristics and creeds; and focus on the salvation of the individual.

## **B. FUNDAMENTALISM:**

### **1. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION**

The word "fundamentalist" was first used in the United States in 1920 but is traceable to a series of pamphlets entitled The Fundamentals (1910-1915). These were written by outstanding conservative scholars of the day such as W.H. Griffith-Thomas, James Orr, B.B. Warfield, C.I. Scofield, H.C.G. Moule, R.A. Torrey and others. They were distributed to all the Christian leadership in the USA. This constituted a full -on attack against anything which was perceived to be a denial of the historic doctrine of Christianity. In particular they rejected higher criticism, affirmed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, denied evolution, supported the unity of the book of Isaiah, affirmed the virgin birth, deity and penal substitutionary atonement of Christ, and the unity and plenary inspiration of Scripture. Opposition was also expressed to Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Spiritualism and Christian Science.

The background to this was the rise of the new university in American life. In the latter half of the nineteenth century campuses multiplied and were no longer inspired by Christian values but commercial and academic goals. Pragmatism and science dominated the world view. Where religion did flourish in education was in a moderately liberal Protestant environment which championed the role of America in the world, the spread of democracy, and the application of modern science to social problems. With waves of immigrant Catholics, the growth of cities and the number of unchurched the fears of evangelicals grew. Evangelical thinking had lost the possibility of forming a Christian mind in America. Evangelical thinking became almost completely populist.

Theological energy came from new streams in the holiness movement, pentecostalism and premillennial dispensationalism. The first led to a preoccupation with inner spirituality: "to lay all on the altar", "clay in the potter's hands", "a deeper walk of grace", a "closer walk with Christ", a "higher life", "victorious living", "overcoming power" etc. Pentecostalism was likewise centred on what should be experienced – verbally, physically, spiritually – in this latter day. Dispensationalists stressed the decline or apostasy of the institutional churches, the degeneration of civilization, and the need for Christians to separate from the compromised and worldly. Satan was intensely active in the world and needed to be combatted by the supernatural power of God. In a world out of control the premillennialist view of the future provided a blessed hope and a way of understanding why things were going so badly.

These positions could all be seen as reactions to social trends: holiness opposed social scientific solutions to life's problems, the in - breaking power of God stood over mechanistic science, the transcendent control of God over history contradicted the divine immanence championed by the learned elite.

All of these trends reduced the need for serious scholarship. "The natural capacities of the human mind do not function in the realm of spiritual things." (Lewis Sperry Chafer). Holiness and the vigorous use of the intellect seemed incompatible, (pentecostal) prophecy meant immediate inspiration and the end of the world was near. The adoption of the Scofield Bible (see below) reduced the need for interpretation.

In the first quarter of the century Fundamentalists in the USA became increasingly more vocal and organised. They became self-consciously a group of militant anti – modernist evangelicals (white in the U.S). This was exemplified in the William Jennings Bryan campaign to stop the teaching of evolution in public schools. In response to the failure of their denominations to respond they began to form new seminaries eg. Westminster and splinter denominations. This was particularly true in the Baptist and Presbyterian scene. The list of enemies became broader, e.g. Marxism, and the fundamentals less comprehensive. The Northern Presbyterians, for example, listed these as 5 essential doctrines: inerrancy of scripture, virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, miracles. In turn some of these groups divided again (often over millennialism), as separation had become a test of true faith: so that by the 1930s they were even less effective against Modernism.

The 1930s saw a revival in Fundamentalist influence. Separatists crystallised around the dispensational theology of the Scofield Reference Bible. As Church and society were hurtling to ruin, there was nothing to say to the ‘now’, everything is in the ‘not yet.’ They were active in the formation of Bible Schools and liberal arts colleges eg. Providence, Denver, Wheaton, Gordon, Bob Jones, Grace, Liberty. They found ways of organising which maintained congregational autonomy but enabled the Association to withdraw recognition of individual schools or organisations. Some outstanding leaders were: Bob Jones (1883 – 1968), John R. Rice (1895 – 1980) and Carl McIntire (b. 1906).

From the 1920s on Fundamentalism began an effective use of the mass media, especially radio and print. Growth continued through the '40s and '50s. Men such as Billy Graham were shunned, not because they were liberal but because they talked to liberals, this "spirit of inclusivism" was contrary to Scripture. Some describe the rise of "neo-fundamentalism" in the 1970s. The use of aggressive evangelism and the media intensified, now with the employment of television. Modern Fundamentalist leaders include Jerry Falwell (Moral Majority), Pat Robertson, Tim La Haye, Hal Lindsey and John McArthur Jr. These men were all politically active, often in a partisan sense: "the Christian Right", e.g. support for Israel. Many of the "mega-churches" of the USA are Fundamentalist. A notable feature of Fundamentalism has always been its stress on cultural values. At various times they have made much of smoking, drinking, chewing tobacco, dancing, attending movies, wearing long hair, short skirts, rock music, role playing games and so on. There has been a strong association between personal holiness and cultural isolation. This could only be preserved in the cradle to grave environment of Christian kindergartens, schools, universities and social facilities. It manifests itself in a highly individual form of faith: "God has no grandchildren."

## 2 The Bible.

The Bible is the theological centre of Fundamentalist religion. It is the "supreme symbol of the faith". (Barr) The Bible is the Word of God *simpliciter*. This implies that the inspiration of Scripture descended to the very words which constituted the original autographs. Such a doctrine of verbal inspiration has as its corollary the

inerrancy of Scripture. The Bible is errorless in every area it touches - biology, geology, history, psychology, philosophy and religion. As such it is the infallible authority concerning the mind and will of God in all matters. It is not enough to call the Bible the record of revelation, it is revelation in and of itself. This leads to a largely literal interpretation. of Scripture. Fundamentalists therefore are opposed to the use of Church tradition as in Roman Catholicism and the emphasis upon the humanity of Scripture in both modern liberalism and contemporary evangelical scholarship.

### 3. Comments.

#### (a) Positively

- i Stress on the importance of the Bible.
- ii Stress on personal holiness of life.
- iii Stress on the necessity of evangelism

#### (b) Negatively

- i Separatist and judgemental - legalistic. (Its demand that the infallibility of the Bible be accepted axiomatically is nothing but a law.)
- ii Individualistic and non –communitarian. It is hard to see why the church is necessary at all, if the Bible carries God with it and can be read alone.
- iii Abandons the wider intellectual life, so that there is no real fundamentalist philosophy, aesthetics, history, poetry and so on. (The major exceptions to this are the age of the earth and political action.) This is exemplified in the simplistic responses to complex social and moral situations, such as the Gulf War, Palestine, homosexuality etc. (Cf. Frank Peretti’s popularity.)
- iv Confusion of American cultural values with the trans - cultural truths of Scripture.
- v Rationalistic, attempts to prove by reason and science the validity of scripture. This is actually set in terms of the confidence of the mechanistic science of the nineteenth century. Theology is objectivised. This leads to a virtual rejection of the insights of traditional theology. “ the worst features of the nineteenth century intellectual situation became the methodological keystones for mental activity in the twentieth century.” (Mark Noll).  
  
This includes the inductive “versification’ approach to scripture. (A historical impossibility before the sixteenth century.)
- vi Anti-Charismatic.
- vii Tends to confuse literal with literalistic. ‘Literal’ refers to the sense of the letter, ‘Literalistic’ to a straight forward meaning. Literalistic interpretation ignores the richness of the biblical text, e.g., metaphor, poetry, apocalyptic.
- viii Makes the Bible as the Word of God the final authority, rather than recognising that the Bible's authority is derivative from Jesus the ontological Word of God. One believes in Jesus because you believe in the Bible. The Word is *in-codified* again after his *in-carnation*. In this it separates the Word from the Spirit, falling into



dualism and omitting especially the importance of the "inner witness of the Holy Spirit" emphasised by Calvin and the Reformed tradition. In its place it puts a rationalistic and *a priori* defence of the faith and the nature of Scripture not derived from the Bible in the first instance, but a notion of what the Bible must be if it is to be "perfect". E.g. 2 Timothy 3:16 is not dogmatic but practical, says nothing about historical accuracy, does not define which books are Scripture, does not state that Scripture is the dominant authority for faith. In the end the mystery of Scripture, how it can be both human and divine, is swallowed up in a scientific analysis of Scripture's nature which denies its very nature. The Bible loses its living authority.

Following Barth, T.F. Torrance opposes fundamentalism on the same grounds as his rejection of liberalism. Each fails to acknowledge that the truth of God's self-communication remains grounded in God himself and not in the media through which God interacts with us. Revelation is God's free act and not: 'a self-contained corpus of divine truths in propositional form'... 'which can be arranged logically into rigid systems of belief.'

## WEEK 8. C: DISPENSATIONALISM

### 1. History:

Usually taken to refer to a system of biblical interpretation put forward in the nineteenth century in order to help believers who studied the Bible alone or in groups to master the Bible as one book. It provides a unified interpretative scheme.

Classic exponents: J.N. Darby (1800 - 1882), one of the main founders of the Plymouth Brethren, C.I.Scofield (1843 - 1921), Scofield Reference Bible (1909, 1917, 1966). Its divisions and notes impart a particular system of interpretation to the text, eg. Matthew 5:1-8, 13 : 44ff.

Also, J.F. Walvoord, J.D Pentecost, C.C. Ryrie, C. Swindoll, J. McArthur Jr. etc.

NB. Particularly strong in the conservative evangelical seminaries of the USA. Dallas, Grace, Moody, Talbot.

### 2. Dispensations.

These are economies (oikonomia) of God's dealings with humanity (Like a steward of a household).

Main text, 2 Tim. 2:15 A.V. 'rightly dividing the word of truth'.

Varies, often seven. Darby's Seven Dispensations:

A. Age of Innocence – pre – law and pre – fall (Gen.1:28 - 3:6)

B. Age of Conscience or Moral Responsibility – pre – law post – fall (Gen.3: 7 “eyes opened” to Flood.)

C. Age of Human Government – the new economy after the Noachic flood (Gen.8:15 - 11:9. Out of the ark to Babel.)

D. Age of Promise – from the call of Abraham to Moses (Gen.11:10 - Ex.18:27. Patriarchal faithfulness; up until the arrival at Sinai.)

E. Age of Law – from Moses to Christ (Ex.19:1 - Acts 1:26. Pentecost)

F. Age of Grace/Church – post ascension to second advent (Acts 2:1 - Revelation 19:21 Hell).

G. Age of the Kingdom/Millennium – from second advent to new creation (Rev.20: 4-6 millenium).

\* These are distinct revelatory periods. God deals differently with people in different ages of economies / stewardships. Features from one dispensation may be incorporated into a later one eg. conscience, government, promise. In each dispensation we find (1) testing with respect to specific revelation, (2) failure, (3) judgement.

### 3. Principles of Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

Literal approach to all of Scripture, especially prophecy. The promises to Abraham concerning land and physical descendants must be fulfilled in geographical Israel and the physical posterity of Jacob.

#### 4. Implications of Hermeneutics

##### A. The Ministry of Jesus

Jesus and John the Baptist preached ‘the kingdom of heaven.’ This was offered to Israel as a nation. If his people had welcomed him, then the role of the Davidic Messiah, a political and religious reign of righteousness and peace, with hegemony over the pagan world, would have been inaugurated.

That is, on the earth, (Isa. 33 : 17).

The Jews rejected Jesus as King (Luke 9:14). The Lord, unable to break his unconditional O.T. promises, postponed or suspended them until later.

##### B The Church.

The church exists in the gap between the promises to Israel and their fulfilment. It, unlike the people of God, is birthed at Pentecost. The church enjoys heavenly promises, the kingdom of God, unforeseen in this parenthetical period, by the prophets. It represents the divine response to the unbelief of the first people of God.

##### D. Eschatology.

A pretribulation rapture concludes the existence of the Church upon the earth.

A major purpose of the tribulation is to bring Israel to repentance about the Messiah.

The kingdom of heaven will come upon the earth after the return of Christ; this will be the millenium. During this period, there will be a physical temple, sacrifices, feasts etc.

#### 5. Comments

##### 1. The nature of the kingdom.

- a. The distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God is unsustainable. Consider parallel passages in the synoptics and Matthew 19:23-24.
- b. Christ has all the power now, Matthew 28:18 cf. Dn 7:14. This is a present reality of universal proportions; hence the Reformed view of the millenium.
- c. This is supported by the present action of the kingdom taught by Jesus in the parables of Matthew 13.
- d. Believers are presently in the kingdom of Christ. (Col. 1:13).

##### 2. The Initiative of the King.

- a. Jesus and John proclaimed the kingdom, rather than offering it.
- b. The kingdom advances of its own power, cf. Daniel 2.
- c. Jesus emphasised the difference between the way the kingdom came and the Jewish expectations, (Matt. 11:2ff, Luke 17:20f).
- d. Jesus refused to become king on the terms of the Jews (John 6:14).  
They reject God’s purpose, but His purpose doesn’t become a parenthesis!
- e. The kingdom is taken from national Israel and given to another nation which bears the fruit of faith (Matt 8:12, 21:43; Luke 10:11; Rom. 11).

f. The apostolic question: “Are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6), refers to the kingdom of v.3 which comes through the apostolic preaching. Instead of a withdrawal from Israel it hopes for a restoration through the gospel as Paul predicts in Romans 11.

### 3. Hermeneutics.

a. Departs from the hermeneutic centre of the bible: Jesus. Tends to go from an historical scheme to Jesus, rather than the reverse, e.g. Jesus in terms of Israel. Jesus is the people of God, true Adam (Rom.5: 18-21, 1Cor.15: 20-22; 45-49).

- Seed of Abraham (Gal.3:16)

- true Israel. (Matt.2:15 etc)

This new temple is where Christ dwells – John 1:14, 2:19-22.

The kingdom is where Christ rules by the new covenant –Hebrews 8-9 etc.

b. This leads to discontinuity and the division, rather than an unfolding in the revelation of God

c. Leads to a departure from the grammatical – historical method.

Moves to literalise prophecy and allegorise narrative.

Example of the former, Ezekiel 38 – 39 as Russian invasion of Palestine is totally divorced from anything which may have been in the historical consciousness of Ezekiel. The Bible is read in the light of history (Pope, Napoleon, Hitler, Arab – Israeli peace plan etc.) and not vice – versa.

Example of the latter; Song of Songs and Esther read in terms of Christ and the Church. (History is typologised.)

d. Eschatology becomes overly apocalyptic.

“With this shift in emphasis the valid theological core of evangelicalism is increasingly lost: the centrality of Christ as saviour, the call for personal faith in Him, the need for personal discipleship and obedience – all of this becomes less prominent. The centre lies increasingly in the working out of a sequence of future events, in which Christ appears no longer in the role of a saviour calling all men to him but rather as a kind of automaton or switch, whose action introduces each new stage of the apocalyptic sequence”. (J. Barr, *Fundamentalism* 1977: 205)

### Other Comments.

a. Open to extremes (Ultradispensationalism) e.g. Sermon on the Mount is addressed to the Jews before the coming of the kingdom and now applies only after the return of Jesus. Acts as a transition from the message of the kingdom in the Gospels to the mystery of the kingdom in the Epistles. This renewed offer of Jesus as Messiah to the Jews in Acts, with its intended miracles, cannot apply today.

b. Tends to rationalism, e.g. Miracles confined to the period of biblical revelation.

c. Tends to gnosticism – the bible cannot be understood apart from a complete system of interpretation, which seems often to be imposed on the text.

d. Neglects the previous history of Christian thought.

e. Leads to a reaction against existing church structures – division and “independent” churches.

## 1340 COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### TERM 4

#### WEEK 1 CONSERVATIVE THEOLOGIANS

##### (A) P.T. FORSYTH (1848-1921)

###### 1. Introduction:

Forsyth was a prominent Scottish Congregationalist. The early influences on his life were Hegel and Ritschl, under whom he studied in Germany. More significantly he adopted the position of Martin Kahler, who refused to separate the historical Jesus from the apostolic proclamation. Jesus was the object of faith. In all Forsyth's writings he never left behind the centrality of the moral sphere which he learned from liberalism. 'God is God not physically but morally, not by power, but by love.' In part this explains his consistent emphasis on the holiness of God and that the true power of the religious life is a moral power. His break with the liberal tradition occurred through a deep experience of the need for atonement through the cross. "It also pleased God by the revelation of his holiness and grace, which the great theologians taught me to find in the Bible, in a way that submerged all the school questions in weight, urgency and poignancy. I was turned from a Christian to a believer, from a lover of love to an object of grace." This was a turning from the liberal pre-occupation with the 'religion of Jesus' to the Gospel of Christ. Forsyth was as much a preacher as a scholar, and brought a freshness to theological discussion which moved beyond the old liberal-orthodox divide.

###### 2. Theological method

(Similarities have often been drawn between the methodology of Forsyth and Karl Barth. This assisted the acceptance of Barth in Great Britain).

###### (a) Revelation

This has to do with ethical knowledge, viz. persons in their acting. God as a person-in-action initiates revelation as ethical judgement, he can never be an object. It is not what we know, but God's knowing us. Since revelation is moral it is not like a miracle in the external world, but applied to the will and conscience, out of which the whole person acts. The goal of revelation is to bring human will and conscience into harmony with a universe whose last reality is moral.

(b) The Gospel

Bible, Church and preacher are all created by the Gospel. The gospel creates assent and models the will to the sonship of faith, this is a (moral) judgement and the act of obedience.

(c) The New Testament

The New Testament is the last stage of a revelatory fact begin with the coming of Jesus. It is the witness to the apostolic Christ, the Christ of the letters and the kerygma. This is not the 'Jesus of history' in the liberal sense.

(d) Use of the Bible

Forsyth based his theology on the Bible but embraced "believing criticism". Some sections of the Bible were reckoned unreliable, and traditional authorship of various books disputed. The supreme revelation of God is in Jesus Christ, and especially in the cross. The Gospel is the apostolic witness to Jesus, which is recorded in the New Testament. As such the Scriptures are authoritative, as the supreme testimony to Jesus Christ.

3. The Cross

This is the central revelation of God's holy love, the public righteousness of God executing judgement against our defiance of his holiness (sin). As such, the cross, the centre of the gospel, is the final seat of (moral) authority, cf. Bible, church, reason, heart. 'Christ is to us just what his cross.' The theology of the cross occupied a central place in Forsyth's theology, as indicated by the title of one of his books *The Cruciality of the Cross*.

Liberalism has sentimentalised God's Fatherhood, so love had replaced grace. 'The Father of an infinite benediction is not the Father of an infinite grace.' (God is not an anthropathised infinite pity.) The need for an atonement was precipitated by the character of God as "The Holy Father". God's ultimate attribute is not love but holiness. "You can go behind love to holiness, but behind holiness you cannot go." God's holiness is the foundation behind the world's moral order and is violated by sin. God's love is "not a passionate and helpless love, but it has the power to subdue *everything* that rises up against it. And that is the holiness of love – the eternal thing in it." Sin is wrong done to God's moral majesty. The holy wrath of God does not fall on sin only but upon the soul. Men and women stand under the holy judgement of God.

Since all of this occurs in the moral sphere it cannot be dealt with in other than a moral way, this calls for atonement. The holy judgement of God must somehow be dealt with. God enforces his holiness by judgement. Only holiness can satisfy holiness, God

the Father is satisfied through the cross not by an emotional means but by a moral equivalence. It reveals the terms of forgiveness. On the objective side this involves a taking on by Christ on the cross the penalty for sin, the atonement is to God and in God. On the subjective side this involves the purification of the guilt of the moral conscience of man. Forsyth expressed these truths in a powerful way. "Nothing will satisfy the conscience of man which first does not satisfy the justice of God." "That which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world" The holiness of God expressed in the cross is our security: "If God had taken his holiness lightly, how could we be sure he would never be light of love?" "We receive the last reconciliation. Then the very wrath of God becomes a glory...Our self accusation becomes a new mode of praise...Our heavy conscience turns to grave moral power." It is atonement that makes repentance, not repentance that makes atonement"

Judgement in Forsyth is personalised. It is God standing in judgement, and not a legal process.

What deals with the wrath of God, which is a sign of his love, is not merely Christ's taking on the penalty of sin, but doing it in an obedient, that is, holy way. Love meets the need of shame but holiness deals with guilt. (Forsyth was not willing to say that Christ was punished by the Father, but that our sins were punished in him, he took our penalty on the cross.) It is by doing justice to the holiness of God that Jesus justified God (cf. Romans 3: 21ff, in 1916 Forsyth wrote an important book on theodicy called "The Justification of God") and at the same time revolutionised the foundation of our moral world. It is the creative moral crisis of history, where the perfectly holy conscience of God acts in relation to the helplessly guilty conscience of man, where divinity and humanity, time and eternity, judgement and grace meet for a new creation.

"Our communion with Christ rose, and it abides, in a crisis which shook not the earth only, but also heaven, in a tragedy and a victory more vast, awful, and pregnant than the greatest war in history could be."

Grace is the action of holiness against sin, the cross is the victory of holiness by judgement. There is no awareness of sin and grace apart from the cross. The cross is the exercise of the Son's faith in the Father by obedience to judgement; an act of consecration and sanctity, the presentation of a perfectly holy humanity to God. It consists of a perfect confession of God's holiness offered up in praise.

"The death of Christ was an experience in His life, yet it was always the dominant, at last the crowning one, which gave meaning to all the rest even for Himself - as He came to learn. It was a function of His total life, that function of it which at once faced and effected the saving, the last judgement of God.....it was on Calvary that it (his blood) rose to seal all and to found forever our peace with God. It was there that it rose to establish our evangelical faith in us, to establish it not as an affection simply but as a life-confidence and self-disposal, as a faith that turns not upon the filling of the hungry heart but upon the stilling of the roused conscience both in God and man by a complete satisfaction and forgiveness once for all." "...the Cross also gives us a footing... that commands all the victories or losses of earth, and a power that rules both the spirit and conscience in the clash and crash of worlds."



#### 4. Christology

Forsyth promoted a form of kenoticism, but not such as to deny the full deity of Jesus. (The latter is a necessary postulate of the redemption which is Christianity, the result of the experience of justifying faith.) In the incarnation Jesus retracted his divine attributes so as to make them potential rather than actual. This involved his use of his infinite power of self-determination as God. A retraction of his mode of being from actual to potential; not so much by limitation as by concentration. During his earthly life Jesus regained the attributes of God by a moral reconquest of his humanity. (Although Jesus had power not to sin (potuit non peccare) he did not know this. He was truly human because he could be tempted by the power of sin.) In the sphere of moral conflict this involved a series of crises and victories leading to a full reintegration of his old state. The greater the humiliation the greater the exaltation of moral power. Jesus achieved total moral plerosis in the resurrection by the infinitely loving act of complete kenosis in the cross. In this way God and man entered into a full actual union, not as the joining of two entities but as the action of two powers.

#### 5. Preaching

In "Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind" Forsyth exposed his break with the weak morality of liberalism and applied his views of the atonement to preaching. The context of biblical preaching is the human race's disturbed conscience, its consciousness of sin. Preaching's purpose is to prolong and mediate the action of Christ's cross. It proclaims, and applies the power of God to win a victory over us by subduing our sin. The objective authority of the preacher is his/her commission to proclaim Christ, the inner authority is the conscience's knowledge of redemption. It is the stilling of the conscience which enables us to face the eternal moral power and is the real power and motive of preaching. What is preached are the great themes of God's holy Fatherhood, moral love, judgement and the full sufficiency of the cross.

Comments: Forsyth's theology is prophetic in force, this is its great strength. Its major weakness is his aphoristic style. This tends to be provocative and illuminating but does not lend itself to replication and succession. As such it leaves a number of puzzles.

## **(B). B.B.Warfield (1851-1921)**

### 1. Introduction

Warfield was one of the important representatives of the high Calvinism advocated by the 19<sup>th</sup> century "Princeton school" of theology in the USA. (Conservative Presbyterian Augustinian Calvinism). These men (Charles Hodge, AA Hodge) were in reaction both against the new evangelical theology of Finney and others and the rise of liberal higher criticism. They were not however 'fundamentalists' in the late-sense, e.g. Warfield accepted Darwin's theory of evolution. Warfield wrote apologetically with the assumption that the existence of God, the religious nature of man, and the truth of the revelation of God in Scripture can be demonstrated solely by human reason. Cf. arguments from church history etc. It was then necessary and impossible to expound the specifically Christian doctrines found in the Bible and to develop a systematic theology. This is a rationalist approach.

### 2. 'The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible'.

This was Warfield's most influential work. In it he sought to demonstrate that the Bible is the inspired and infallible word of God.

"The Bible is the word of God in such sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of his mind and will....this conception of co-authorship implies that the Spirit's superintendence extends to the choice of the words by the human authors (verbal inspiration) thus preserving entire truthfulness (inerrancy)."

Inspiration is: 'the influence (or, passively, the result) exerted by the Holy Spirit on the writers of the sacred books by which their words were rendered also words of God and therefore perfectly infallible.'

Warfield seeks to demonstrate the truth of this assertion by arraying the field of biblical evidence - the attitude of Jesus and the apostles to the Old Testament, the claims of Scripture itself (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Heb 1:6,7,8: 4:4, etc.) This leads to the doctrine of plenary, as opposed to partial, inspiration - the whole of the Bible is inspired. If we cannot accept the Bible's account of itself we may not accept its account of other things, the infallibility of the Bible is therefore the ground of Christian faith.

He argued that this was also the position of the Patristics, Reformers, Westminster divines and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Evangelicals. For a biblical statement to be shown to be in error it would have to confirm to 3 tests:

1. The error would have to be in the original 'autograph.'
2. The interpretation showing the error must be certain.
3. The true sense in the autograph must be inconsistent with a certainly known fact of science or history.

In saying these things Warfield did not ascribe to the "dictation" theory of inspiration. Rather he developed the concept of "concursum" (working together). The Bible is fully the word of God and fully the work of man. "If God wished to give his people a series of letters like Paul's he prepared a Paul to write them - and the Paul he brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters." So, the writers

authored exactly what God wanted and exactly what they wanted. (This view of inspiration flowed easily from Warfield's Calvinistic soteriology.)

In all this Warfield was careful to distinguish the inspiration of Scripture from inspiration in the general artistic or poetic sense. It would be more accurate to speak of the "inspiration" of Scripture rather than the "inspiration" of the Bible (vs Vulgate.) The key biblical term, theopneustos is never used extra – biblically in the active sense of God breathing, it must then be passive in meaning, referred to what is produced by God, God-determined, God-given, 'God-breathed.' The origin (God) and the effects (Bible) are not separated in the biblical writers minds. It is not a case of God sending words down to the human authors but a much more intimate action of God in the human writers.

### 3. Comments

#### (a) Positively

- (i) Warfield's work remains the classic defence of the inspiration and authorship of the Scriptures.
- (ii) His biblical research exposed the inadequacy of much of the contemporary liberal criticism of Scripture.
- (iii) His insistence on the objectivity of scripture (along with the church, creeds, sacraments) stood in contrast to perfectionism and religious romanticism.

#### (b) Negatively

- (i) Tends to de-emphasise the role of the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, we first establish the infallibility of the Bible by the use of reason and then are committed to it as the Word of God on the basis of the witness of the Spirit.
- (ii) Tends to rationalise on an *a priori* basis, e.g. Word (Bible) and Spirit are inseparable, miracles no longer occur.
- (iii) Approaches the scriptural material with a dogmatically influenced hermeneutic. 2 Tim 3:16, in context, cannot yield a doctrine of inspiration.
- (iv) Ignores the diversity of biblical genres. There can be no single classification of *concursum* when we compare the range of biblical texts, for example, Proverbs with Romans. A different psychology, and of a different social psychology (tradition) are involved.
- (v) Individualistic and ahistorical. The Spirit continues his word in the community of faith in continuity with Scripture.

## (C) G.C. Berkouwer (1903 - 1995)

### 1. Introduction

Berkouwer is part of a theological tradition associated with the Free University of Amsterdam. This was founded in 1880 by Abraham Kuyper at one time the Dutch Prime Minister and a brilliant theologian whose aim was to demonstrate the relevance of Christ to every human endeavour. One of the most influential teachers in the University was Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) who occupied the chair sometime before Berkouwer. Influenced by Barth, but not neo-orthodox, he wrote the important "The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth". A major work was also his "Conflict With Rome". (He was one of the Protestant observers at Vatican 2.) He is best known for his 14 volume series in dogmatics and is undoubtedly the most important twentieth century theologian in the Reformed tradition.

### 2. Theological Method.

Berkouwer's basic principle is that of "co-relationship", that is, the co-relationship of theology with faith, and hence with the Bible on the one hand, and with the Church and its confessions and preaching on the other hand. The creeds must be interpreted in subordination to the Word of God, for the creeds function only for the purpose of guiding the Church in the preaching of the Word. All theology (including predestination) must be preachable. (This is quite different from the correlation method of Tillich: as Berkouwer's is 'pre-scientific', non philosophical and Reformed.) This means a strict adherence to the basic Reformation principles of *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*. (Hence the titles of some of his books: 'Faith and Justification', 'Faith and Sanctification', 'Faith and Perseverance'.)

Theological statements must be recognisable objects of faith, rather than an abstract, logically coherent system of profound thought about God with no relevance to faith in Christ. The material of theology is confined to the Bible, and the key to it is the revelation of God's grace in the cross and resurrection of Christ. Revelation is not the communication of truths about God, but God's coming in Jesus Christ to the sinner. Revelation must be accepted by faith, which is directed to Christ. Herein, faith is defined by its object, Christ, in a non-symmetrical relationship. At this point Berkouwer breaks with the traditional Reformed image of a linear *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) in the Christian life:

Salvation in Christ this is the centre of the way of salvation. The lines themselves may be called faith. They connect every step on the way of salvation to salvation in Christ. Thus seen, the relation between the way of salvation and Christ's salvation will keep us from placing the objectivity and subjectivity. For faith has significance only in its orientation to its object – the grace of God. Thus, *sola fide*, instead of directing our attention to the believer, points us away from him to grace and God. We may apply this as a touchstone to every consideration of the *ordo salutis*: all lines of the life of faith must meet at the centre, the grace of God. The creeds must be interpreted in subordination to the Word of God, for the creeds function only for the purpose of

guiding the Church in the preaching of the Word. All theology (including predestination) must be preachable.

### 3. Holy Scripture

Berkouwer moved away from the theories of inspiration found in Warfield and Fundamentalism. These were futile attempts to explain 'how' scripture is the Word of God. They, in the end, represented the Bible as timeless, suprahistorical and non-creaturely. Despite their renunciation of dictation models of divine influence he found in such authors an excessive emphasis on the divine side of Scripture. 'Verbal' inspiration suggests words 'put in' and then 'brought out.' In principle this leads to a denial of the humanity of the Bible. People tend to be instruments of a divine monergism. If we neglect the human side of Scripture we are led to interpret it as a sort of oracle-book ignoring the historical situation of the original authors. This leads, despite the claims of those who speak most of the authority of the Bible, to misinterpretation. The truth is that God's Word takes the human into its service.

If we are to recognise the character of the Bible as a divine-human book we must recognise that it has hills and valleys. Like all human writings it has a time-bound and time-related nature. For example, in relation to slaves and women. This does not open Scripture up to theological criticism but is a recognition that revelation has occurred in a particular historical framework. To deny this would be to make the Bible an altogether transcendent and timeless document, hence unintelligible. This was the danger of a dead orthodoxy.

Berkouwer resists every attempt to specify how the Spirit and the Word are connected. One must first be gripped by scripture. In a manner characteristic of his theology he insists that a proper mystery remains at every point of connection between God and man. Inspiration is not a theory, and it cannot be deduced from analogies. One must avoid both speculative spiritualism and scholastic rationalism. God grants a depth of certainty beyond human reason. What is clear is the goal (*scopus*) of Scripture as is so clearly specified in 2 Timothy 3: 16-17. We must not isolate Scripture from its purpose, that is, salvation, through its witness to Christ. The gospel is the central message of scripture, the canon developed around it. In terms of the purpose of Scripture, godliness, we may be assured that the Bible is completely reliable. That the whole Bible is Word of God. 'The trustworthiness of the Word does not submit itself to an a priori testing, but can only be understood in all the persuasive power of the Word itself as the sword of the Spirit.' The Spirit binds us to Christ as the centre of Scripture.

### 4. Predestination:

In accord with his theological method Berkouwer contends that the doctrine of election can only be understood in the context of faith. He opposes the a posteriori speculation taken to logical extremes by decretal theology. Election is a matter of doxology. This leads to a rejection of Arminianism, for if predestination is not an effective power, why praise? Likewise it has no relation to casual – deterministic thought. It is a matter of doxology rather than doubt. As such it has nothing to do with a hidden God whose absolute sovereignty is exercised by means of naked power. Election takes place "in Christ" and it is only in the light of Christ that we can understand the nature of the

sovereignty of God as not some external threat to our humanity but the source of its liberty. This means that the Church in its teaching must offer predestination not as a problem but, as in the New Testament, a gospel, a way of salvation. Election is not connected with a certain "number" of people but with Christ, and the doctrine of the double decree must be rejected as a radical distortion of Scripture. Logic may indicate election implies rejection but the testimony of Scripture does not. With Bavinck, Berkouwer sees in the doctrine of election an "inexpressible comfort" for both believer and unbeliever, since it proclaims that there is hope for the "most miserable of men". This is a scandal for the moralism which always sees the election of grace as an offence.

#### 5. Anthropology

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Berkouwer's theological anthropology is his holistic emphasis and refusal to be tied to a priori philosophical categories. The "image of God" is not to be equated with a particular human function, such as dominion, nor with a faculty such as self-consciousness. It is the whole man which is created in the image of God. The context of this image is not immediately accessible to us since the Fall, but is fully revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ. It concerns "the whole man, his place in the world and his future, his likeness in his being a child of the Father, of this Father in heaven."

Berkouwer rejects both dichotomistic and trichotomistic analyses of man as being a philosophical imposition on the biblical material - man does not have a composition. The diversity of biblical terms is simply a way of speaking of the whole man from different perspectives. What must be denied is that one part of man is specifically religious. "Heart" for example, is the depth dimension from which full human existence is directed and formed. Neither dichotomistic nor trichotomistic expressions in Scripture (Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23 etc.) are scientific descriptions of human existence. Dualism is not acceptable as it implies division in human nature cf. duality - in unity. Real differences exist in man but it is only in terms of the whole man ("pre-functional heart") that Scripture speaks with concern.

## (D) H. THIELICKE (1908-1985)

### 1. Introduction.

Thielicke represents a resurgence of Lutheran theology in a conservative but non-pietistic direction. An opponent of the German Christian movement under Hitler he was interned and achieved prominence as a preacher during and after the Second World War. This he saw as the primary task of the Church. He was committed to evangelistic mission.

### 2. "Theological Ethics."

This appeared in English in three volumes and is widely regarded as the most important effort in the area since the Reformation. He is concerned to communicate to modern man in the midst of his secular existence, but is aware of the danger of destroying the gospel in the process by a false accommodation, as may be the case with Bultmann. Since the gospel is always being assaulted by new questions, faith and preaching need to take on new forms. Yet we must not go on speaking "as if we were still living in the sixteenth century". Even if intention is constant expression must change with history. There must be no division in the world of Monday to Friday and the world of Sunday worship.

Ethics is more than the practical epilogue to dogmatics. It is "faith inquiring as to the conduct faith posits for man towards himself, his neighbours, the world and its orders". The foundation for a truly Evangelical ethics is the gospel, justification by faith. Here justification and sanctification must not be confused. As a justified man the Christian has a new possibility and a new motive for obedience. This does not place him outside the law of God but fills him with a new reason for keeping it in the power of the Spirit. In certain situations compromise may be unavoidable and in the "borderline situations" a Christian may in fact feel compelled to sin eg. Jews in the cellar. In cases like these one can only live with a good conscience by a knowledge of justification.

The second volume of *Ethics* covers political questions, eg. totalitarianism, theology of the state, revolution, war. The final volume 'Sex' deals with the nature of sexuality, love, marriage, divorce, contraception, abortion and related questions.

### 4. "The Evangelical Faith."

This was also a three volume work. Volume I was a prolegomena on the relations of theology to modern thought forms. The theological agenda has changed, the questions are now the credibility of the message itself. The second volume considered the doctrine of God and of Christ, the final volume discussed the Holy Spirit, the Church and eschatology. These latter volumes were arranged in the order of the Creed, but in continuing dialogue with modern theology. A perennial theology, such as 17<sup>th</sup> century orthodoxy, was an abstract conceptual system. Authors and recipients of verbal messages are subject to the process of history. Thielicke's aim was always to state the Gospel which does not change, in language and concepts which do, but in such a way that the original truth is not reconstructed.

In his first volume, Thielicke suggests that theological conflict today is best defined not as a conflict between moderns and conservatives. Modern is taken to mean mature, scientific and contemporary; 'conservative' is taken as reactionary, antiquated,

immature, mechanical. Yet both groups share a common concern of communicating to modern man. For example, the significance of belief in evolution for belief in creation, the verifiability of the biblical records. (Thielicke's position here is not 'conservative': statements about God-in-himself, theology without anthropology, are statements about naked deity – an impossible and non-relational reality.)

The conflict is between 2 types of contemporary theology, Cartesian and non-Cartesian. Since for Descartes the knowing self is the centre of thought, Cartesian theology begins not with the message but with the recipient, that is with anthropology. What point of contrast does the message find in my existing conceptions? There are a priori sets of conditions for understanding. As I can only appropriate what I can understand, understanding determines the possibility of appropriation. (Hence the obsession with hermeneutics. "They are continually sharpening their knives and no longer have anything to cut." K. Rahner.) The "adulthood" of the human race means the message cannot be accepted uncritically - adulthood means autonomy.

(This follows Kant's rejection of heteronomy, God cannot be an authoritarian tyrant.) Examples of this includes 'Lessing's ditch': miracles told to me cannot, unlike necessary truths of reason, be a basis of faith, and Schleiermacher's contention that I can only appropriate a truth that is part of my consciousness. In asking what elements in the receiver can accept the message one is led invariably to an existentialist analysis of the human condition which controls the theological process. A pre-understanding is brought to a text, one is first aware of anxiety, then 'hope' speaks to me. The result is accommodation e.g. Bultmann: what is appropriate to modern man? The theological focus is on questions, not answers, doctrines are transformed to fit the consciousness, that is, reduced anthropologically. A general and pre-Christian understanding of Christ must precede a theological agenda. Humanity becomes the criterion of what can come to him/her. The possibility of faith dominates the content of faith.

The kerygma is robbed of its historical factuality by being existentialised and the subjective consciousness of the recipient is so elevated as to destroy any transcendent communication. The proclamation is put under human control, pragmatically, the function of truth is to enable me as a self-developing individual to master life, truth is 'under-me.' ('The old creature is always desirous of new things.') This leads to a "total perversion" of the message of the Gospel. Non-Cartesian theology (not of the anachronistic and reactionary sort) recognises the need for a contemporary statement of the gospel but gives precedence to the kerygma itself. Theology is a response to the Word of God.

Thielicke state that the ontic state of man shatters his noetic possibilities, viz. his state of being in sin makes God unknowable. Kantian autonomy sought a point of contact with God in the conscience expressed in the categorical imperative: 'I ought therefore I can.' The Christian (cf. Rom 8:7) says: 'I ought but I cannot.' God's Word is a claim on us without boundaries, it confronts our illusions that we are the norm of possibility. Even a fulfilment, say the rich young ruler, would be defective. 'You ought but you cannot' is a theonomy. God's point of contact with man is his illusion, it transcends humanity's possibilities with a new birth and a new creation; outside of the new creation there is nothing 'new.' The Word isn't integrated into the consciousness but creates a new heart.

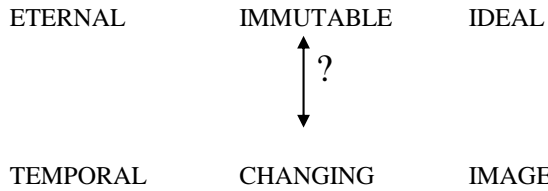


It is the role of the Holy Spirit to disclose the Word of God, which creates its own hearers. The conditions for appropriation are set down not by the receiver but by the gospel. Old truth is not to be merely quoted, but put in "the linguistic medium of the new age:" This is not a case of appropriation but actualisation: the gospel is actualised for modern people. What is transformed however is not the message but the medium. I am called 'under the truth.' Current terms are pressed into the service of the kerygma in a process of transformation which strips them of their ideology eg. the use of Logos in John, chapter 1, or the Barmen Declaration's (1934) new application and expression of Reformation confessions.

This is a work which must take place under the agency of the Spirit. The creative Word changes the condition of my being by bringing me into the truth to hear God's voice. The Spirit is given to me to impart God's self-knowledge, in Christ. Only God knows what is in God, hence accessibility to the truth cannot be controlled rationally, but is only given by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is his office to effect a genuine and creative representation of the gospel in the present. This theme of the renewing work of the Spirit incorporating us into the divine acts and imparting to us a new identity as hearer of the Word is the special mark of non-Cartesian theology. In this way Thielicke opposes rationalistic unorthodoxy not with rationalistic orthodoxy but with a genuine biblical orthodoxy.

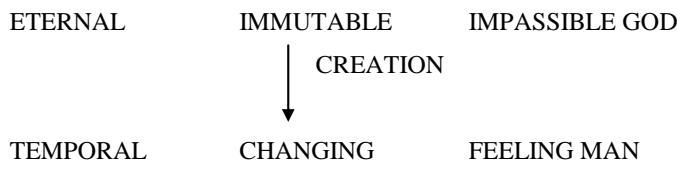
**TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE: THE TWO WORLDS PROBLEM.**

**1. Platonism.**



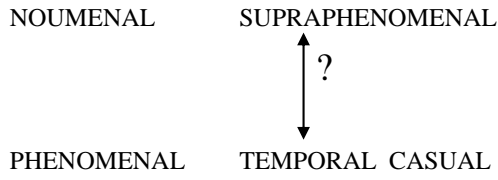
ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE : 2 realms of being  
 : epistemological problem - how can the transcendent realm be known.

**2. Classical Christian Theism.**



ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE : overcome by creatio ex nihilo.  
 : revelation, culminates in Incarnation, divine sovereign initiative.

**3. Kant.**



ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE : metaphysical realm unknowable  
 : "God" a postulate to secure moral justice  
 "ought" "is" (immortality, God).

**4. Schleiermacher.**

“The universal, productive, connecting necessity of all thought and Existence.”

↓  
Creation and  
Preservation.

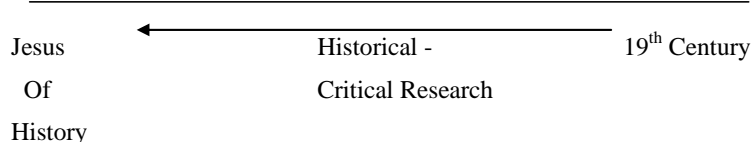
Changing world of natural order and consciousness.

ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE : overcome by omnitemporal sustaining power of God.  
: no revelation in classical sense.

God not known directly but in terms of “the feeling of absolute dependence.”

**5. Liberal Protestantism.**

Sought to resolve the Kantian problem by an appeal to moral values embedded in history.



ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE : solution to the metaphysical (2 worlds) problem is abandoned.  
: “God” is only known and experienced in the values central to the self-consciousness of Jesus (love, brotherhood, God as Father).

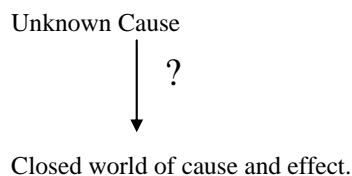
**6. Neo - Orthodoxy (Barth)**

“Wholly Other” “Infinite Qualitative Difference.”

↓ Word of God  
Sinful man

ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE : God establishes a relationship with man in Jesus Christ.  
: Sovereignty of God’s grace in revelation (acting Subject).

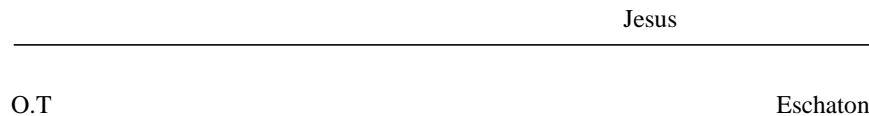
**7. Existentialism (Bultmann)**



ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE : God cannot be spoken of directly, objectively (=’s misinterpretation of myth).  
 : demythologised Kerygma confronts us with an existential decision in terms of authentic existence.

N.B. No ↓ (Barth) nor ← Liberal Protestant.

**8. Pannenberg.**



ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE : vertical (metaphysical) dualism rejected (no word from beyond viz. outside of history giving a God’s-eye view).  
 : God’s deity is his rule, revelation knowable only in history.  
 : ↑ = Fullest manifestation of future rule of God, perspective from the end is revealed in ↑ .  
 : eschaton = ↑ on cosmic scale.



**Term 2 Week 2: DYNAMIC THEOLOGIES**

INTRODUCTION

Liberal theology following Schleiermacher was essentially a-Historical. The details of the earthly life of Jesus and so on were incidental to his teaching, upon which we are to base our moral and spiritual life in the Kingdom of God. In opposition to Schleiermacher the Erlangen school of theology used the term Heilsgeschichte, meaning 'redemptive history' or 'salvation history' to indicate that our personal relationship to God is part of a sacred history involving Israel, Jesus and the Church. Barth made a distinction between Historie and Geschichte. Historie is that which occurs in space and time and whose causal relationship and facticity can be investigated by the methods of Historical criticism. The crucifixion, for example, is Historie. Geschichte is real, but on a different plane of being than Historie. It means that there is a world of reality which is not subject to the material influences which we deal with and experience, a world of reality which can be expressed in spiritual terms only. Geschichte is supra-Historical, inaccessible to the methods of Historical criticism and known only to faith.

Geschichte includes Historie but is not to be identified with it. Geschichte is always contemporary. 'The history (Geschichte) of the birth, life and death of Jesus Christ revealed in his resurrection actually happened at a definite time, but has not ceased to happen today and will still happen, because he is God's act.' (Barth)

Barth's liberal critics branded this as a form of modern docetism, or analogous to Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal. Another response was to insist that the total history of revelation and salvation is connected with real events in actual history, of which Christ is both the centre and the culmination. Thus Barth's dichotomy is abandoned. From all the variety of individual New Testament elements there emerges one picture of the Christ - event from pre-existence to parousia. This view does not make the Christian religion dependent upon changes in Historical research, though it acknowledged its place; it is faith in Jesus Christ which makes sense of the witness of the biblical records, and faith is essential to the right understanding of their Historical content. The stress is upon the acts of God in history. In the 1940s and '50s such an approach became known as "Biblical Theology", its advocates emphasised the uniqueness of the language and culture of the Bible eg. G.E. Wright. Since that time criticism of the movement has exposed many of its assumptions as simplistic or not able to be supported by the biblical data itself. For example., the stress on the great acts of God in history fits much more comfortably with Exodus than Proverbs, with Luke - Acts than with John. The radical distinctions made between Greek and Hebrew thought are not valid, John 1:1, is an example of ontological thinking.

A. OSCAR CULLMANN (1902- )

(1) Introduction

Cullmann was a relatively conservative German scholar who was basically an historian and New Testament theologian rather than a dogmatician. Hence his approach to the New Testament is much more independent of philosophical categories and much more reliant on exegesis than his contemporaries, such as Bultmann.

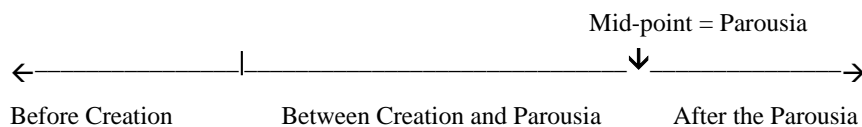
(2) Christ and Time

This was Cullmann's most influential book (1951). Biblical history is the heart of theology. It is not discontinuous with secular history, but its central importance can only be perceived when Jesus is recognised as the absolute divine revelation to men. That which holds together this history as a continuity is Christ, who is the Lord of all history. This assumes his pre-existence and future coming. To abandon this history as mythological is to abandon the Christian faith.

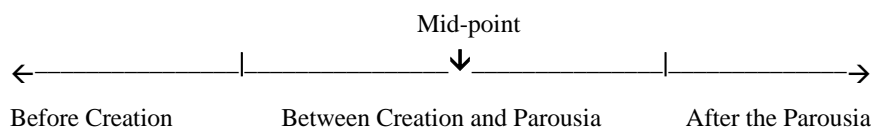
Cullmann examined the New Testament terminology for time and found not a contrast between Here and Beyond (spatial) nor one between time and eternity but a distinction between Formerly and Now and Then. This age, initiated by the Fall, and the coming future age, are not discontinuous in terms of a division between time and timelessness but are to be differentiated in terms of the presence and absence of evil. The linear conception of time in the revelatory history of the Bible is in sharp contrast with the cyclical conception of Greek philosophy, or a natural theology based on seasonal cycles. The same opposition is formed between the Platonic view of time as a copy of eternity and eternity as endless time which we find in the New Testament. The two positions are irreconcilable, Christian thought must be purged of Greek influence. Only God is the Lord of time, he alone surveys it in its entire extension and measures it with a measure which is different from ours.

The central point of Cullmann's thesis is that the mid-point of time for the Christian is no longer the future but the Easter event. He compared the division of time in Judaism with that of early Christianity by means of a diagram.

JUDAISM



CHRISTIANITY



For Judaism the coming of the Messiah is the mid-point of time after creation, dividing it into this present evil age and the age to come. In Christianity the mid-point is such that the two ages 'cut across' one another. With the coming of Christ the Kingdom of God has already arrived, although it also has a future character. Christianity still expects the end to come, but its delay is not critical because Christ the mid-point has already arrived. Just as D-Day preceded and anticipated V-Day so the cross and the resurrection is the already concluded decisive battle. Even though the events of the beginning and the end are not to be understood, historically they form part of a single coherent time - line which is illuminated in total by the prophetic nature of the Christ-event. It is by this standard that we understand the Old Testament, the coming of the Spirit, the preaching of the gospel and so on.

### (3) Criticisms

(a) James Barr, Martin Hengel and others, have pointed out that there is no single Jewish or Hellenistic view of time and eternity.

(b) Barth (C.D. III/2, 443 etc) could not accept Heilgeschichte as the organising principle of the Bible. Christ cannot be inserted onto an already established geometrical figure of time. Rather, from the vantage point of their experience of the Word, the early Christian community looked upon the ages.

Barth is not unhistorical, but refuses to allow to history an independent status; viz. independent of Jesus. Christ draws his meaning from the immanent trinity and not from history. The Church can only face the mystery that Christ, to all human appearances (only) man, is God. It cannot stand within this mystery.

## B. WOLFHART PANNENBERG (1928 -)

### (1) Introduction

Pannenberg experienced the evils of Nazism and Stalinism as a young man, this persuaded him of the need for a this - worldly application of Christian theology but also of the final impotence of all social systems. He was earlier influenced by Barth but came to reject his dichotomy between Historie and Geschichte. Likewise he opposed Bultmann's flight from Historical criticism via the means of existentialism. Bultmann was a 'radical pietist' cf. the subjective conservative pietists with their faith grounded in a conversion experience. Embracing Historical criticism he came to the conclusion 'that even God's revelation takes place in history and that precisely all the biblical writings suggest this solution of the key problem of fundamental theology.' Revelation is not a word from beyond history giving a God's-eye-view.' Pannenberg seeks to speak in terms which will keep the debate about the reality of God open in the contemporary world.



## (2) Revelation as History

If the facticity of the resurrection were accessible only to faith this would separate theology out from the general field of human knowledge, so that theology would not be a public discipline (so Barth). There is no division between salvation – history and world – history, between faith and reason, and between revelation and natural science. God must be the God of the whole of reality. If the meaning of the resurrection is dissolved into a non- Historical personal experience we do not escape our own subjectivity, (so, Liberalism). Rather 'it is in history itself that divine revelation takes place and not in some strange Word arriving from some alien place and cutting across the fabric of history'. Meaning arises out of events themselves. The true claims of Christianity in general and of the resurrection in particular are open to normal Historical verification. If people do not see this it is not because they need another way of knowing but that they do not use their reason correctly. Faith does not cause the resurrection to be 'seen' but is founded on the Historical basis of the resurrection itself. Hence hermeneutics and critical history are one science.

Since Pannenberg permits the use of Historical criticism this does not yield the sort of rationalism found in the old orthodoxy. There are inconsistencies in the resurrection narratives and all Historical judgements are by their character probabilistic. Faith goes beyond rational knowledge and gives to us certainty.

However, there is no evidence of an excited psychological state that would produce visionary appearances in the disciples, and the tradition of the empty tomb goes back to the earliest witnesses. The historical reality of the life of the early church requires an antecedent historical explanation: the resurrection.

Revelation is not limited to 'salvation - history' but includes the knowledge of all events. The world as created is open to God so that all human beings are in a certain sense religious. There is an intuitive sense of the infinite as the individual becomes aware of the difference between themselves and the world. This however provides only an implicit knowledge of God which must be crystallised by religious traditions. It is in the history of Israel, with its monotheism, and in Jesus, that the full self-disclosure of God within history has come. The Bible is the source book for this tradition. God's deity is his rule, his Lordship. His deity is therefore 'at stake' in the outcome of world history. The ultimate validation of God's trinitarian essence is eschatological. In relation to the world, cf. in se, God's very being is futurity.

The future therefore has ontological priority over the present. God works in the world from the future; through the future eternity, enters into time. The eschatological goal draws history towards God, cf. Hegel.

Since only the totality of history can give us the completion of the revelation of God: 'Only in the future of his Kingdom come will the statement "God exists" prove to be definitely true. But then it will be clear that the statement was always true.' The

resurrection of Jesus is so important because 'the end of the world will be on a cosmic scale what has already happened in Jesus.' In the resurrection the eschatological future has entered into history, this is the greatest demonstration of the reality of the rule of God, his Kingdom. Christ is the final manifestation of the coming God. The apostolic message is the message of the Kingdom, the Lordship of God over history.

### (3) Christology

Pannenberg makes a distinction between two different approaches to the person of Christ. Christology 'from above' begins with the deity of Jesus and proceeds to ask how he can also be a man. However:

1. This is precisely what is disputed in the world today. We cannot start with the fact of Incarnation as self-validation.
2. This approach neglects Jesus' Jewishness and other real historical features of his life.
3. This puts us in God's perspective.

Christology 'from below' begins with the man Jesus of Nazareth, his historical flesh, and asks in what way he can be God. Christology 'from above' assumes what needs to be proven and leads to a lack of interest in the Historical facts of Jesus' life. The key question is, how can Christology from below establish the deity of Jesus?

Without the resurrection there would be no Christian message. The works and words of Jesus must be confirmed by God Himself. It is in the resurrection that the deity of Jesus is established. 'If Jesus, having been raised from the dead, is ascended to God and if thereby the end of the world has begun, then God is ultimately revealed in Jesus.' The resurrection is God's vindication of all his earlier claims, which otherwise would be empty. It is the eschatological dimension of the Christ-event, the future breaking into the present, which establishes the deity of Jesus. The resurrection determines retroactively that Jesus was the eternal Son of God. It is eternally true that Jesus was Son of God because of his resurrection.

### (4) Comments

#### (a) Positively

- 1 Pannenberg provides a useful corrective to the dominant existentialist bent of German theology throughout the 20th Century. His emphasis upon the resurrection and its Historicity is to be applauded.
2. He may be best interpreted not as pushing Barth aside, but as critically preparing the way for the preaching of the gospel (Barth).

#### (b) Negatively

1. The equation between God and his rule can be questioned. There are occasions in the experience of Israel and the psalmists where God does not seem to be acting, yet his existence need not to be denied.
2. Diminishes the distinction between general and special revelation; and the difference between the created order and history. This seems due to a weakening of the doctrine of sin, he does not seem to take into account man's willful and stubborn blindness. Hence the Spirit's role in revelation is reduced.
3. Faith is more than the rational evaluation of evidence, it is a gift, and not a function of reason.
4. Tends to make history, viz. the results of contemporary Historical research, the final authority rather than Scripture. This assumes that the modern historian is in a superior position than the first century believers.
5. His idea of revelation dominates Christological investigation, rather than the reality of Jesus. Barthians take this up at length. If God is not a member of class (Aquinas), he can be known only in his acts (revelation). Any attempt to understand Christ from below to above is to move from the general to the particular (in anthropology, cosmology, ontology). True knowledge of God can be obtained only by actually depending on Christ. It is not possible to think of Jesus' humanity apart from his deity (John 1:14). Otherwise one moves in the direction of an Ebionite Christology where the 2 natures are identified. This leads to a historicism in which Jesus is assessed only by his historical existence. Pannenberg comes close to identifying Jesus' humanity with his deity. His position moves towards a "degree Christology" (Gunton), where it seems that Jesus differs from us only through his absolute submission to the Father.
5. Eschatology is restricted to the last things, especially the resurrection of the dead. Jesus' whole life is however eschatological. He is already confessed as Lord during his earthly ministry and today. We are even now living in the end.
6. Is retroactive causality conceivable? What is meaningful in the realm of law is transferred to being, and time is treated as space with possible moves in all directions. (It may apply to past events in so far as present and future consequences are in view.) Pannenberg's statement that Jesus is one with God on account of the resurrection appears to deny that this was so previously, but that after the resurrection he was shown to have been one with him all along. It confuses a development in the being of God with a development in the thinking of the disciples after Easter.
7. Pannenberg appears to limit the role of the Holy Spirit as the one by whom Jesus is one with the Father from the beginning. This leads to an immanentist tendency where the reality of God is found in humanity.
8. A Christology from above is where the New Testament begins, as in the prologue of John and the Christological hymns. The confession that Jesus is the Son of God is as early as Mark's Gospel. This is not just a functional Christology, but an ontological one. Pannenberg is forced to adopt a functional position because of his critical approach to the Gospels: Jesus never called himself the Messiah or made a divine claim. This is because it is psychologically impossible for Jesus to live a

truly human life if he knew he was God. But how can we know this from outside the reality of the incarnation?

Stories like the baptism of Jesus and the virgin birth are legendary. How can we have a reliable Christology from below when the historical records are unreliable? The resurrection appears as a discontinuous event with all that has preceded it in the non – supernatural life of Jesus.

9. If God owes his full self-identity to the historical events of the cross and resurrection there is no freedom of grace (Blocher).
10. If metaphysics is swallowed up in history, there is nothing for history to be about (O'Donovan). The result is the transcendence of God becomes compromised, the distinction between creature and Creator is blurred and the ontological trinity appears as a construct or correlate of the economic trinity deduced from the man Jesus.

## 1340 COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### C: PROCESS THEOLOGY

#### (1.) Introduction

The term 'Process Theology' is at times used somewhat ambiguously to embrace a range of views which emphasise the dynamic aspects of reality. The philosophical ancestry of this position (which stresses becoming rather than being) can be traced back to the Greek thinker Heraclitus (c. 500B.C.) through Hegel, the evolutionary thought of philosophers influenced by Darwinism (H. Spencer, H. Bergson) and the new physics of Einstein and Heisenberg. In the general sense it includes Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Samuel Alexander, William Temple and others. In a more specific sense it means the theology developed on the foundation of the teaching of A.N. Whitehead (1861-1947)

Whitehead was a mathematician turned philosopher who sought to construct a metaphysical interpretation that could comprehend the whole range of human experience in the face of the anti-metaphysical and positivist views of modern scientism. His philosophy is built on an empirical analysis of our experience as human bodies, seeking to identify those elements which are necessary to all existence whatsoever. Whitehead's system is in fact a new form of natural theology in conscious opposition to classical Christian theism. It is impossible to understand process theology without acquaintance with its metaphysical principles. Significant process theologians include Charles Hartshorne, Schubert Ogden, John Cobb and Norman Pittenger.

#### (2.) Process Metaphysics

The ultimate building blocks of the universe are 'actual entities'. These range down from God to the least existing thing. They are neither instantaneous objects nor changeless substances but are necessarily in a constant state of becoming or 'process'. Each actual entity has a beginning and an end which constitutes an epoch (age), at the end of the epoch the entity 'perishes'. The ultimate category for Whitehead is 'creativity', it is found in all actual entities so that they and the whole universe is self-creating. As groups of actual entities perish their characters persist and come together ('concrecence') to make up new 'actual occasions'. This process is guided in an orderly way by what Whitehead calls 'eternal objects'. eg. geometrical patterns, pleasures. They do not however exist outside the world-process.

Every actual entity has two poles, consisting of a 'physical' pole (the past) and a 'mental' pole (potentiality). An actual entity in the process of concrecence is a 'subject' creating itself out of its own data, its 'objects'. In perishing an actual entity ceases to be self-informed and becomes an object for succeeding actual entities. Actual entities create one another by accepting and rejecting dimensions of past actual entities - this is called 'prehension'. For Whitehead the ultimate nature of actuality is an activity wherein entities previously alien to one another prehend to form a complex unity, this

is called 'feeling'. By a 'transference of feeling' the part does not perish but is objectively accumulated in the present.

No activity is without purpose. The fundamental purpose motivating an actual entity is its own self-creation, by this it achieves its 'subjective aim'. the 'conceptual' pole of the prehension of an actual entity is its 'idea', the information for which is supplied by an eternal object. Eternal objects exist in their determination of the potentialities of actual entities, but the particular nature transcends their realisation in these entities.

### (3.) Doctrine of God

God is the chief exemplification of the metaphysical principles upon which all reality is based. He is supremely event orientated and the guarantor of process. God is logically but not chronologically prior to the world. He is the source of the subjective aim of world events. He is the actual entity from which all temporal coming together receives its initial aim from which self-creation starts. God offers to all occasions the best possible combination of the already existing and ultimate principles of creativity. He works persuasively by 'lure' and not by coercion.

Like all actual entities God is dipolar. His 'primordial nature' is the prehension of the sum of all possibility. God envisages eternal objects in their relevance for actualisation by the actual entities constituting the world. This conceptual pole of God is indifferent to actuality itself. This side of God's nature is timeless and abstract because it is the ideal (all-inclusive) realisation of potentialities. It is God apart from his interaction with particulars, it is God alone with himself.

God's physical pole is his 'consequent' nature. Whitehead saw the failure to recognise that God has a consequent nature as the biggest fault in classical theism. It is in his physical experience that God prehends the totality of the actuality of the world becoming. Like all actual entities God's being is constituted by its becoming. "he shares with every new creation its actual world; and the concrescent creature is objectified in God as a novel element of God's objectification of the world...." God's primordial nature is completed by his consequent nature as it objectively immortalises in its experience all the values of the world.

### (4.) Attributes of God.

- (1) Omniscience - knows all the present but the future as only potential, not actual.
- (2) Omnipotence - a lure rather than a coercive power.
- (3) Perfection - God is unsurpassed by anything other than himself, but is growing in awareness with time.
- (4) Passibility - God shares in all of the pains and joys of the world.

## (5.) Comments

### (1) Positively

- (a) Correctly exposes classical theism's over dependence on Greek philosophy eg. immutability, impassibility.
- (b) Emphasises the interrelationship between God and creatures.

### (2) Negatively.

- (a) Its primary authority is reason rather than revelation. It, like the Greek philosophy it rejects, works analogically from the world back to the existence and nature of God.
- (b) God and the world are mutually interdependent (pantheism); denies divine intervention as in creation *ex nihilo*, miracles, answers to prayer etc.

David and Randall Basinger nicely illustrate this point by the following comparison:

“The relationship between the God of process theism and the world can be compared to the relationship between a conductor and her orchestra. Without the orchestra, the conductor could not express herself (after all, she plays no instrument).... Moreover, the conductor - no matter how competent - cannot unilaterally guarantee that the piece will be played exactly how she has decided it should be played.... The extent to which what she envisions is actualised is finally up to the ability and the responsiveness of those playing the instruments.” In applying this to the actual world, of course, we must keep in mind that many of the players refuse to acknowledge the conductor’s existence, and a great many more pay only the most cursory attention to her direction.

God is ultimately passive, the process and its forms are givens.

- (c) God is not ultimate, various metaphysical principles eg. creativity, are.
- (d) Conforms all traditional Christian doctrines to its metaphysical scheme, rather than vice-versa.

## 6. Process Theology and Mainstream Christianity

### (1) Scripture

Process theologians reject extrinsic authority. The ultimate authority is human experience with its implicit (unspoken) knowledge of reality. When one meets a verbalisation in Scripture of already apprehended truths known by experience the Bible acts as a lure leading us into our self-created future. This is part of the creative action of God's love.

Since the human experience of ultimate reality is universal the Bible can at best claim a relative authority in relation to the testimonies of the scriptures of other religions.

## (2) Christology

Since process thought rejects the classical distinction between the natural and the supernatural a two-natures (Chalcedonian) Christology is impossible. Focus is on 'the Christ' rather than Jesus. Every occasion is incarnational since it is the insertion of God's being and action in history. Christ's life was God's in the sense that it was lived out in complete obedience, Jesus most perfectly followed the 'lure' of God. He exemplified the primordial nature of God. The result of the life and death of Jesus is the emergence of a new kind of community, the church. This is the meaning of the resurrection: the body of Christ is born.

## (3) Salvation

This is not thought of in forensic nor moral terms. Evil is the by-product of the process of development. The life of Jesus drew his disciples into a unity with one another and with God. It was the power of Jesus' life, perpetuated through the Bible, myth and ritual ('means of grace') which acted as a creative agent transforming their experience into a harmony. Salvation occurs as a person recognises that they have been disloyal to communality and accepts God's lure to be a member of the body of Christ

## (4) Eschatology

Nothing purposeful is lost as God uses the past to present new possibilities for the future. Since God is able to preserve each event as an 'eternal object' nothing is lost to the love of God. We are able to add to the enjoyment of God. We possess 'objective immortality' in the memory of God. Some look forward to a time when God's aims will overcome the individual evil events and bring about a true community of love and peace - heaven. (Usually however, any possible consummation is put beyond history).



## 1340 COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### D: J MOLTSMANN (1926-....)

#### 1. Introduction

Moltmann, like W. Pannenberg, became a Christian in adult life and rejected Barth's distinction between secular and sacred history. The two men came in contact in the 1960s and shared an emphasis on the centrality of eschatology for the Christian faith. 'From first to last and not merely in the epilogue; Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionising and transforming the present.' Moltmann became the founding father of a school of theology known as the 'theology of hope'. This opposed both conservative individualism and the existential withdrawal sponsored by Bultmann. For Moltmann, Christianity needed to recover from the nineteenth century bourgeois attitude which had no hunger for change and so rejected eschatology. As the resurrection of Jesus Christ has occurred in history the whole world lies open to transformation - politics, sociology, ethics, ecology. As such Moltmann is a secular theologian, not in the sense of accommodating his thought to a non-Christian system, such as Marxism or existentialism, but through developing the implications of the Christian message for the whole of life. His emphasis is on praxis (practice) rather than doctrine.

#### 2. Revelation as Promise

This emphasis was put forward in his first main work, The Theology of Hope (1964). Moltmann criticizes Barth for making Jesus Christ a revelation of eternity instead of a revelation of the historical future. The eschaton is not merely the transcendent "present of eternity". The revelation of God does not belong to the traditional doctrine of God as eternally complete in himself, nor to anthropology in the Kantian mode, but to eschatology.

In Moltmann's thought the future has priority over the present. The future is not a simple extension of the past but is open to new possibilities. It is the future which draws the present to itself in an open-ended way, the theological category which best expresses this perspective is promise. 'A promise is a declaration which announces the coming of a reality that does not yet exist. If it is the case of a divine promise, then that indicates that the expected future does not have to develop within the framework of the possibilities inherent in the present, but arises from that which is possible to the God of the promises...' It is God's promises which open up the future. The future is ontologically prior to the present, it draws the present into new forms of reality. The "overspill" nature of God's promises means the future is open ended.

Between promise and fulfilment one is to hope, the opposite of this is presumption or hopelessness, the condition of sin. Christian hope is open to the reality of the future kingdom of glory revealed in Jesus Christ. 'Christian eschatology speaks of Jesus Christ and HIS future.' Moltmann sees the death and resurrection of Jesus as a dialectical contradiction, out of these events emerges the synthesis which is the promise of the transformation of the world by God in the future. The resurrection is the definitive event of God's eschatological promises to Israel of a new creation. God has guaranteed his promise by enacting it to Jesus. This is God's promise for the future of the world. God has subjected himself to change for us and his creation. God now has the future as the mode of his being.

In Moltmann's dialectical eschatology (and Christology) the promise of God contradicts present reality. Importantly, God overcomes evil in the death and resurrection of the Christ in this world. The resurrection functions as a theodicy by promising God's righteousness for an unrighteous world and making the present state of the world questionable. God will prove his lordship by re-creation. World transformation depends on the anticipated revelation of Jesus to the world, the fulfilment of his lordship over all things promised in his exaltation. The future world will be analogous to the history revealed in the resurrection.

In the light of God's promises and the witness of his faithfulness to Israel and Jesus, the Church 'is like an arrow sent out into the world to point to the future.' The goal of this mission is universal justice, the socialising of humanity and peace for all creation. The Church is to work for social change now on the basis of future hope. This world is to be renewed by God. The Church is to show openness to the Holy Spirit whose task it is to renew the Church within by the power of the coming kingdom. In opening the church to the future the Spirit opens the Church to the World. The role of the Church is 'participation in the history of God's dealings with the world'. Our future is the future of God, which he has tied to time and history.

### 3. The Crucified God

This was the title of Moltmann's second major book (1972) and is the adoption of an expression of Luther. It seeks to answer what the cross means to God. God defines himself, he constitutes himself as trinity in history, and we come to know him, at the cross. God could not be who he is, separation-in-unity (trinity) without the cross. The *theologia crucis* 'is the key signature for all Christian theology'. That theology which does not arise from and focus on the cross is not genuinely Christian. The cross is "the test of everything which deserves to be called Christian."

Moltmann opposes all other forms of theology as the childish projection of human needs. He dismisses analogical knowledge of God based on innate ideas or known effects. The *theologia gloriae* of scholasticism knows God's hands but not his heart. This leads to triumphalism and a focus on human achievement. A theology of science, e.g. Schleiermacher, Hegel, is not a theology of faith. All forms of metaphysical

theism, and so protest atheism, are empty before a theology of the cross. By a new principle of theological epistemology, God is known in his lowliness and shame. This is especially true of the cry of dereliction which attests that Jesus was abandoned by his Father. This prompts the question 'Who is God in the cross of the Christ who is abandoned by God?'

The Christian life and theology is an attempt to answer the question of Jesus on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:19 is a key text for Moltmann. In the cross we see the willingness of God to identify with human rejects, for there Jesus was crucified between two thieves, where outcasts belong and outside the city gates. And in that awful experience which 'divides God from God to the utmost degree of enmity and distinction' we recognise that both Father and Son suffer the cost of their surrender. 'The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father.' 'God himself died in Jesus for us.' In the cross Jesus is the God abandoned God in an infinite grief of love. The Spirit proceeds from the cross as he Spirit of the love who raises up abandoned humans. The cross is an event in the intratrinitarian life of God.

Moltmann abandons distinctions between the immanent and ontological trinity. The Father suffers the death of his fatherhood and the Son becomes fatherless. This is a death *in* God even if it is not the death *of* God.

This means that the person of Jesus Christ suffers on the cross, not just his human nature. The early Fathers denied this because they were influenced by the Stoic doctrine of *apatheia*. If God is impassible, then, according to Moltmann, God is incapable of love. The reality of God's suffering spells the end of any concept of God's remoteness from the world. The cross reveals not eros (love of the like), but agape. God has voluntarily opened himself up to his creatures to be affected by their actions and by their suffering. In his sovereignty God enters into the suffering of the world. 'God's being is in suffering and suffering is in God's being itself.' 'God is not more divine than he is in this humanity.' He is not the pantocrator of the imperial rule.

"The 'religion of the cross' ... scandalises; and most of all it scandalises one's 'co-religionists' in one's own circle. But by this scandal, it brings liberation into a world which is not free.... There is nothing so unpopular as for the crucified God to be made a present reality through faith"

The effect of the cross continues in our present history, until all things are handed over by the Son to the Father (1 Cor 15:20 – 28). This is the consummation of Fatherhood, the creation being brought into a filial relationship with God.

#### 4. God and Creation

In his later works (*The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* 1982; *The Way of Jesus Christ* 1990 etc.) Moltmann discussed the relationship between God and the world in more detail. He denies a separation between the immanent (God- in- himself) and economic trinity (God in salvation). The immanent trinity is eschatological, God himself as economic trinity moves through history in changing patterns in relationships (sending of Son, resurrection, sending of Spirit, glorification of Son and Father) which will only come to fullness of completion when the Kingdom of God is perfected. At this point,

when 'God is all in all' the economic Trinity is raised into and transcended by the immanent Trinity. This is the goal of the Christ event outworked in the lifting up of creation: 'the trinity in glorification'.

Moltmann has labelled his view 'trinitarian panentheism' or 'dialectical panentheism'. In the present crisis of the human condition it is essential that we emphasise God's immanence in the world, what it means for God to be the Creator. The idea of creation is implicit in the Father's love for the Son. God has decided for a mutual interpenetration between himself and the world, it becomes God's medium, his 'body' where he feels both its joys and its needs. God must suffer to love, must go through time to be eternal, is only completely God by being Man. God's experience of history enriches his essential trinitarian being. He is almighty because he exposes himself to the experience of suffering, pain, helplessness and death. This doctrine of God forms the basis for social and political action in opposition to the inward escapism of pietism and Liberalism or the view of God as a monarch in heaven isolated from earthly concerns.

'God experiences history in order to create history. He goes out of himself in order to gather things to himself.'

## 5. Comments

### (1) Positively

- (a) Moltmann's analysis and emphasis on the cross is profound.
- (b) The structure of his eschatology returns it to its proper (biblical) place as central to theology (cf. Bultmann's reductionism, e.g. the resurrection is the apostles' appreciation of Jesus' life.) He achieves this by grounding eschatology in the trinity.
- (c) Moltmann properly exposes weaknesses in classical theism's distancing of God from the world.
- (d) He has attempted to encompass all of reality - material, spiritual, physical, religious, economic and social, time and eternity under the umbrella of eschatology using biblical motifs.

### (2) Negatively

- (a) Overemphasises the futurity of the Kingdom of God. The future takes on ontological status which only applies to the present. How can the future explain the present if the future is genuinely open? As a consequence of this Moltmann is wrong to place the kingdom of God wholly in the future.
- (b) Tends to subsume all theology into eschatology. Barth accused Moltmann of baptizing Ernst Bloch's principle of hope. The Bible emphasises the saving events

of God in the *past* which are of eternal value for *this* time. Biblical 'remembering' takes us back to the redemptive events which constitute the new creation.

- (c) Jesus Christ is not simply the paradigm of revelation and promise, but is also the content of these promises. In Jesus Christ God's future is already present to us. The Father's purposes have been fulfilled in the Son. Moltmann has preserved the place of history in eschatology at the expense of Christology.
- (d) Links God's being too closely to Historical events. Tends to define God's being in terms of salvation history rather than vice-versa. In this he is too dependent on Marxist (Hegelian) categories concerning ultimate reality. God is thrown into the struggles of the world. God is defined by the experiences creatures have of suffering, nothingness and death. This follows if there is a perichoresis or relationship of mutual need between God and humans. Such a God is not *actus purus*, fully realised in life and joy.

If God necessarily loves us then he must save us. The freedom of God as Lord (Barth) is swallowed up in God's freedom as friendship. For God to be free the relationship between God and the world must not be reversible or mutually conditional. To understand God through history is to confuse the free decision of God to enter into covenant with humanity with the fact of creation. We then project our experience on to God and redefine God by reason not revelation (Barth).

Moltmann comes close to reducing the atonement to a theodicy. In biblical thinking God does not suffer history he moves it. That is, God is not overwhelmed by his creation.

- (e) As in all historicist theologies Moltmann tends to immanentism; solutions are put in terms of social transformation. Personal and individual sin tends to be excluded. In a neo - Kantian framework eternity is eclipsed by time. Moltmann is uneasy with a dramatic divine intervention from outside present human existence. The transcendent pole of biblical eschatology is dissolved in the immanent and earthly.
- (f) Moltmann does not clearly distinguish between the suffering of God and incarnational suffering. The reality of the incarnation is that God suffers as a human being, not God 'as such'.

## 1340 COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 3: CONTEMPORARY ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

#### A. VATICAN II

##### 1. Historical Introduction.

After Vatican Council I the R.C. Church in Europe became entangled in a controversy to do with 'Catholic Modernism'. This movement adopted the basic conclusion of the dominant Liberal Protestantism of the day. In 1910 Pius X condemned the movement, excommunicating its leaders and requiring all the clergy to take an anti-modernist oath. This led to a clamp down on free thought and biblical studies in the R.C. Church. In 1958 John XXIII was elected as an expected 'caretaker pope' who would maintain the status quo in the few years before his death. He stressed however the need for the Catholic Church to be 'brought up to date' in an historical sense. This was a response to rapid post W.W.2 changes in technology, science, economic growth, materialist world views, Marxism, atheism etc. The form of expression of dogma was in need of change. So the Pope called an ecumenical council which became known as Vatican II (1962-1965; 2540 members), it issues in the beginning of contemporary Catholicism and the end of the Tridentine era. The spirit is changed from one of opposition and condemnation to conciliation; the 'medicine of mercy' (John XXIII). The approach is pastoral, biblical and historical cf. philosophical. The Acts of the Second Vatican Council consist of sixteen documents of three different kinds: Constitution, Decrees and Declarations. Of the four constitutions two, on the Church and on divine revelation, are entitled 'dogmatic', these are the centre of the doctrinal teaching of the Council.

##### 2. The Church

###### (a) The Pope

Papal infallibility is affirmed but the emphasis is shifted to the collegiality of bishops. 'the infallibility promised to the Church resides also in the body of bishops when that body exercises supreme teaching authority with the successor of Peter.' These are the successors to the apostles, with Peter as first among equals. This moved away from the tension between Popes and Councils.

###### (b) The True Church

This is still identified with the unique structured communion which is the R.C. Church. However, the Church is not identified as to its boundaries with the R.C. Church. All men are called to belong to the R. C. Church but this is only necessary for salvation where men aware of this necessity refuse to enter it or depart from it.

This is a major shift from the 'invincible ignorance' position of Pius IX (1854). Protestants and Anglicans are recognised as 'separated brethren', Eastern Orthodox are accepted as directly descended from the apostles. 'God-fearers' may obtain salvation outside the Church. All this is pointed to a future resolution rather than calling for a return to the Roman Catholic Church.

(c) Mary

All the traditional Marian doctrines are affirmed. She is the Mediatrix, who mediates between us and God. This 'in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power.'

(d) The Laity

The Council reversed the traditional position of defining the Church in terms of the clergy. The church as a whole is the people of God. The laity shares in Christ's priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry, including missionary work. This took in a lay apostolate beyond clerical ministry.

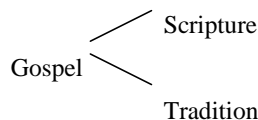
3. Divine Revelation

(a) The context of revelation

Moved away from propositionalism (dictation) to God's revelation of himself. (Barth's influence is apparent here). 'This plan of revelation is realised by deeds and words having an inner unity: The deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man is made clear to us in Christ, who is the Mediator and at the same time the fullness of all revelation.' (Revelation cannot be detached from Christ.)

(b) Tradition and Scripture

These transmit the one source of all saving truth, the gospel.



It is not stated that tradition adds to Scripture, but doctrine develops with time. *Sola scriptura* is implicitly denied 'It is not from sacred Scripture alone that the church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.'

#### (c) Inerrancy

'Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted to put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation.'

This is open-ended and allows for error in the Bible where it does not affect its essential message and for incidental misstatements. There is no way of specifying from within the bounds of Scriptures what is reliable and what is not. For example, what is wanted...', could it be 'God is love' and what else?

#### (d) The Bible

Lay people are encouraged to read the Scriptures. 'Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ.' Bible translation in cooperation with Protestants is encouraged. Catholic biblical scholarship is commended, but 'under the watchful care of the sacred teaching office of the church' and 'with loyalty to the mind of the church.' 'the task of authentically interpreting the word of God...has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church.' This involves an interaction between the magisterium, sacred tradition and the whole church. In principle, this subjugates biblical research to the hierarchy established in the Vatican.

#### 4. Comments

Vatican II opened a Pandora's Box for contemporary Roman Catholicism. Translation of the Bible into the vernacular, experimentation in liturgy, Bible study and ministry by lay people, ecumenical contact with non-Catholics and so on produced a new face for Catholicism. With it came the risk of new theologies and deep tension within the Church of Rome itself. These movements and developments are still in progress.



## B: CONTEMPORARY ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGIANS

### 1. K RAHNER (1904-1984)

#### 1. Introduction

Rahner is undoubtedly the most influential Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. This is because of his genius, his work in formulating the theological statements of Vatican II, his mediating approach to theology (between conservatism and modernism) and the sheer range and volume of his work. His influence in Catholic seminaries could be compared to that of Barth in the first half of the century. His major work Theological Investigations runs for 16 volumes, about 8,000 pages. The context of Rahner's writings is his dialogue with modern philosophy in an attempt to renew what may be said about the faith. Rahner begins with an attempt to integrate the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas (act), the Catholic theologian, with that of Kant (transcendentalism), the most influential modern philosopher. (This is reminiscent of Aquinas' attempt to baptise Aristotle.) He was also influenced by Heidegger (existentialism) as a student. This makes Rahner's writing very difficult to understand as his approach is that of a philosophical anthropology expressed in metaphysical language: 'transcendental Thomism'.

#### 2. Theological Method

Rahner seeks for a foundational principle which will point to the credibility of the entire Christian message and implicitly confirm its doctrines. His fundamental theology is a rational justification for dogmatics, proving it to be possible. He finds a foundational principle in the transcendental method. A transcendental deduction asks, given the undeniable reality of a thing, 'What must be real in the mind or the universe for it to exist?' 'What are its *a priori* (given) conditions?' eg. questioning is an undeniable reality, and the *a priori condition* for knowing (it anticipates knowing). There must be a correlation between the Christian message about God (key) and a human being (keynote) otherwise God would be unknowable. 'The *a priori* transcendental subjectivity of the knower ... and the object of knowledge ... are related to one another in such a way that they mutually condition one another ...' If we investigate the human person as a transcendent being with the ability for knowledge and freedom, undeniable realities, we should be able (philosophically) to anticipate the Christian message.

Intellectual judgements involve setting a thing apart from oneself and at the same time seeing it in relation to oneself - this is to transcend both oneself and the thing in an act of abstraction. It involves separating them from, yet in relation to, the whole sense of reality. This transcendental perception has its inference the whole of reality, yet no one perceives the whole reality. This shows that human beings possess 'pure openness for absolutely everything, for being as such'. As human beings are structured *a priori* to an infinite horizon they possess the capacity for divine revelation.

This natural transcendental capacity is an ability of humans as 'spirit' (not just matter),

and is called the *potentia oboedientialis* (obediential potency). In every act of knowing God is presupposed for in it human beings reach out toward an infinite horizon of meaning hope and love. (Human hope, love only exists against this background). This is a created implicit knowledge of God possessed by human beings as human beings. Human nature is self-transcendent into God whose being (contra: Nietzsche, Satre etc.) is not alien to man. Such a knowledge is however preconscious.

### 3. Transcendental Revelation

Rahner sought to avoid the dual errors of suggesting either God was extrinsic (deism etc) to human existence or essentially wedded to it (modernism). Being aware that 'God' cannot be understood in terms of human capacity, Rahner expounds fundamental theology as a preparation for the gospel.

The 'supernatural existential' is a concept which describes how the whole of humanity in its distinctiveness (existential: freedom, self-awareness) is elevated by God's gracious communication (supernatural: transcends nature) so that it actually experiences God. This is a free act of love by God. This grace by a prevenient act causes a radical openness to God so that his Word can be heard as his word. It conveys real knowledge of God's offer of redeeming grace, whoever cooperates with the gracious presence of God in the supernatural existential can and will be saved. The grace-given supernatural existential is the beginning of the beatific vision.

Transcendental revelation happens in everyday life, for it is constitutive of humanity. God is constant communication with humankind; not by special revelation but in a general, unsystematic, unthematic non-reflexive point of contact for such revelation. The possibility of salvation is given in human nature as such. God is the answer to the existential struggle for meaning.

God has made himself an intrinsic principle of human transcendentality. It is God who a man meets in his conscience, even if he does not recognise it. 'Even the atheist... is not excluded from attaining salvation, provided that he has not acted against his moral conscience as a result of his atheism.' "'the anonymous Christian" ...is the pagan...who lives in the state of Christ's grace through faith, hope and love, yet who has no explicit knowledge of the fact that his life is oriented in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ...every individual who does not in any absolute or ultimate sense act against his own conscience can say and does say in faith, hope and love, *Abba* within his own spirit and is on these grounds in all truth a brother to Christians in God's sight' Eternity is grounded in the time of freedom and responsibility, so that any radically good moral decision is an experience of the eternity promised in the resurrection.

### 4. Categorical Revelation

This type of revelation is made possible by transcendent structures but is itself specific, reflexive and thematic mediated in history through events, words and symbols. It is public and ecclesial. It is the disclosure of the inner reality of God and involves a dialogical relationship between God and man. In other religions such events are inter-

mixed with error. The historical revelation in the Bible is the fulfilment of all other revelation, whether transcendental or categorical. This is a difference in degree.

‘... Christianity... is not one particular religion among others, but rather the sheer objectivation in history of that experience of God which exists everywhere in virtue of God’s universal will to save all men by bestowing himself upon them as grace.’ Absolute revelation is found only in Jesus Christ, the Incarnation of God. This is not a bolt out of the blue but the fulfilment of the whole purpose, structure and evolutionary history of the universe itself.

By the power of the fullness of being (God) the self transcendence of the human spirit reaches its ultimate fulfilment and breaks through into the divine. The Incarnation itself is implicit in the transcendental structure of human being. Man is a cipher for God, whose purpose for creation is incarnation. ‘When God wants to be what is not God, man comes to be.’ ‘God is the inner-most constitutive element of man.’ All things are therefore fulfilled in Jesus.

## 5. Comments

### (a) Positively

The brilliance and beauty of Rahner's theology is undeniable. Its emphases on the created capacity of human beings to know God and their constant *de facto* dealings with God are correct, and a reminder not to extend sin to the ontological level.

### (b) Negatively

- (1) Abstract and complex, tends to reduce history to historicity ie a category of human existence, and so reinforces the status quo.
- (2) Tends towards panentheism, God's 'otherness' is neglected.
- (3) Doctrine of 'anonymous Christians' is unbiblical and optimistic, leads to the neglect of serious mission.
- (4) His transcendental method ascribes to the length and breadth of human history what is supposed to be grounded in Christ. History has no genuine independent bearing upon transcendental experience. This means, for example, that Christ is raised ‘into the faith of the disciples.’ The essential being of the resurrection is realised only in the unthematic knowledge of God. ‘The main function of the historical Jesus, for Rahner, is to link our prior unthematic experiences and beliefs to an event in history which then validates our transcendental experience.’ (Molnar). This is so much the case that one could reject the apostolic experience of Jesus’ resurrection but not incur guilt if one did not reject one’s own transcendental experience of hope.
- (5) The centrality of transcendental experience inhibits a clear distinctive between nature and grace, reason and revelation, philosophy and theology, creator and creatures, the economic and immanent trinity, Christ’s bodily resurrection and our faith in him.
- (6) Rahner’s theology operates from a centre in ourselves and does not refer us back to Christ as the centre. What Rahner describes as transcendental experience amounts to the creature using his or her experience and language to redefine God’s eternal being.

## 2. E.SCHILLEBEECKX (1919 - )

### 1. Introduction

Schillebeeckx is the leading theologian of the Dutch Roman Catholic Church and made significant contributions to Vatican II. His earlier writings were non controversial but in later years his views on Christology and ministry produced unresolved tensions with the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He is a very public theologian. In method he is more like Rahner, influenced by Kant and 'neo-Thomist', in theological content he has moved toward the more radical views of Kung.

### 2. The Development of Dogma

The study of the development of dogma must grow out of the study of the development of tradition. It is the whole Church which is responsible for the handing on of revelation from God. This revelation is not only in-word but in-reality. Revelation-in-reality is an experience of the grace and presence of Christ, revelation-in-word enters into our conscious mind via the proclamation of the Church. Only by the inner illumination of the Spirit (*lumen fidei*) do we come in contact with the presence of Christ. This light of faith is possessed by the faithful at all times, and the development of doctrine is an attempt to put this implicit faith into an explicit verbal form. This must be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Only in the whole Church can dogma be developed outside of the conditioning factors of human life which may dominate a particular group. Gradually, in and through the implicit and explicit process of development, the light of faith within the body of Christians makes itself more and more strongly felt until all the various voices converge and the firm conviction grows in the Church that a definitive statement is necessary. In this way the faith of the universal Church cannot err.

Within the general progress of dogma, each formulation contains representational elements which are determined by a particular historical period and situation. These aspects must be relinquished later if the essential aspects of these foundations are to be preserved. eg. Christ's ascension in a Copernican universe, traditional views about marriage and natural law, the dominance of men over women.

### 3. The Eucharist.

Schillebeeckx considers the background and wording of the canons of the Council of Trent in order to uncover the real 'intention of the authors'. It is a-historical to suggest that the Council Fathers could have put away their Aristotelian metaphysics and produced a pure statement of faith. This distinction can only be made by a later generation. One may safely discard the Aristotelian form of Trent's statements. But must we accept that the being of the bread and wine changes into the body and blood of Christ? Here Schillebeeckx concludes that for the Catholic view reality is such that things are what they are in an inward and absolute manner. (Not psychologically construed, as in Protestantism.) We must then accept that the ontological change of the bread and wine is central to the Tridentine affirmation of faith.

Schillebeeckx is careful however to note that transubstantiation is not a physical change, but metaphysical. Normally the appearances of the bread and wine, their phenomena, are a sign of the reality of bread and wine. In the Eucharist these same phenomena become a sign for a new reality, the reality of the body and blood of Christ. This change amounts to a transignification. By explaining the nature of the Eucharist in terms of the category of meaning (a category in philosophical anthropology) rather than substance (metaphysics) Schillebeeckx hopes to communicate the reality of the eucharistic mystery more effectively to contemporary culture. (Cf. for example, a change in a nation's flag, say South Africa in 1994.)

#### 4. The Mission of the Church.

God's grace establishes a community of persons as a reflection of man's communion with God. Wherever this happens in Scripture God appoints a representative or vicarious mediator for either the salvation or destruction of the many. Examples are Abraham, (eg Gen. 12:3) and Moses. The community established through mediation exists for universal mission. Jesus is the supreme victorious mediator who stands at the head of a new humanity comprising the entire human race. He is the eschatological prophet who brings liberating Christian praxis, not ideology. He gives to history its ultimate immanent significance.

The Church is 'the living link with Christ - horizontally with the Jesus of history,...vertically, with the Lord of glory'. It is the purpose of the Church to be the ever-present Body of Christ with Mankind, deepening its fellowship with God. The mission of the Church is to love humanity in its ordinary dealings with the world. Baptised communicants belong to the 'church', anonymous Christians are 'pre-church'. There are no sharp distinctions between nature and grace, the saving presence of God is in human experience per se.

#### 5. Comments

Schillebeeckx's work is exhaustive, complex and coherent. His theology however is heavily dependent on philosophical categories, both Kantian and Thomist rather than beginning with the Bible. This invariably leads in the direction of the sort of natural theology and historical criticism condemned by Barth (and others).

### 3. H KUNG (1928 - )

#### 1. Introduction

Kung is doubtless the best known and most widely read of contemporary Catholic theologians. Originally conservative he came to notice in 1957 by publishing a work on justification which argued that the Council of Trent (taken in context in opposition to Luther's extreme position) and Karl Barth were essentially compatible on this subject. This has received a variety of responses. He was an adviser at Vatican II, but was disappointed with some of its results. His Infallible (1970) rejected the dogma of papal infallibility on historical, philosophical and biblical grounds. The Church as a whole may be said to be indefectible, but only God is infallible. The primacy of the Pope is one of service, not sovereignty. During the '70s Kung published apologetic works On Being a Christian (1974), Does God Exist? (1978) Kung's chief concern was in 'seeking out "the" modern man in the place where he is actually living in order to relate the knowledge of God to the things that stir him.' Thus he leaned heavily in the direction of accepting the findings of current liberal historical criticism, especially concerning the person of Jesus and his resurrection. In 1979 the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared, with Pope John Paul II's approval, that Kung could no longer function as a Roman Catholic theologian. Since that time his popularity and influence have increased.

#### 2. Theological Method

This is the method of 'critical rationality', an alternative to critical rationalisation with its maths like proof and fideism; that is, to liberalism and conservatism. The former (Cartesian tradition) assumes the universe is rational and reduces the universe to empirical data. But how does one test rationality. The latter abandons reason, advocating belief without reasons, critical rationality builds on the basic decisions upon which all of life is based. These cannot be proven or disproved but are rationally justified in so far as they fit human experience as a whole. Only if God exists can we be sure that reality is coherent and meaningful and that fundamental trust is not groundless. The alternative, atheism, drives one in the direction of nihilism, an option which cannot be consistently sustained in practice. Atheism provides no basis for aesthetics or ethics, everything is meaningless. People however do not live like that, they experience 'fundamental trust', in meaning, order etc., as compelling. This should lead to a belief in a personal transcendent - immanent God. Thus there is an indirect proof in rationality of belief in God.

#### 3. Ecumenical Theology

Theology must use general principles, as all other sciences. In a post modern world one must search for new basic frameworks of meaning and interpretation in theology. We are in need of a theological shift as radical as the Reformation, a sort of conversion, one which will preserve, critique and transcend modernity. The two poles of this paradigm must be God's revelatory activity in Israel and Jesus on the one hand and our own human world of experience on the other hand. Kung turns Tillich's method of correlation into a 'critical correlation': Where the two poles contradict the primacy lies in the Christian message. The Christian message, the gospel of Jesus Christ, is

however the one exposed by historical criticism, only this is the absolute norm of theology. The Bible is indefectible but fallible, Church tradition helps identify the truth of the Christian message.

The pole of human experience establishes the necessity of critical reason in understanding and evaluating truth claims, confirms the assumption of a scientific view of the natural world and demands a generous, tolerant inclusion of all faiths toward each other. This is a critical ecumenical theology. 'Belief in God is nourished by an ultimately substantiated basic trust...'. Any person who has committed himself to such a basic trust is a believer. All major world religions seek to connect human beings to the ground of their existence by a relationship of trust, as such they are 'ordinary' paths to God. Only in Jesus however is God's grace mediated to men, he is the ultimate path to God.

#### 4. Christology

His Christology is functional, Christology without the presuppositions of church dogma.

Kung's Christological method is 'from below'. This gives priority to the historical Jesus and the New Testament gospel. The Jesus of the New Testament was not a priest, power broker, revolutionary, monastic, or pious legalist. He did not fit into any of the religious categories of his day nor of ours. He was the man totally submitted to God's cause, the kingdom of God and the good of others. Jesus is the real revelation of the one true God. He was God's advocate, deputy, representative and delegate whose origin was from God. Nowhere does Kung affirm the physical resurrection or deity of Jesus, though he seems to believe in an ideal pre-existence of Jesus in the mind and will of God.

#### 5. Comments

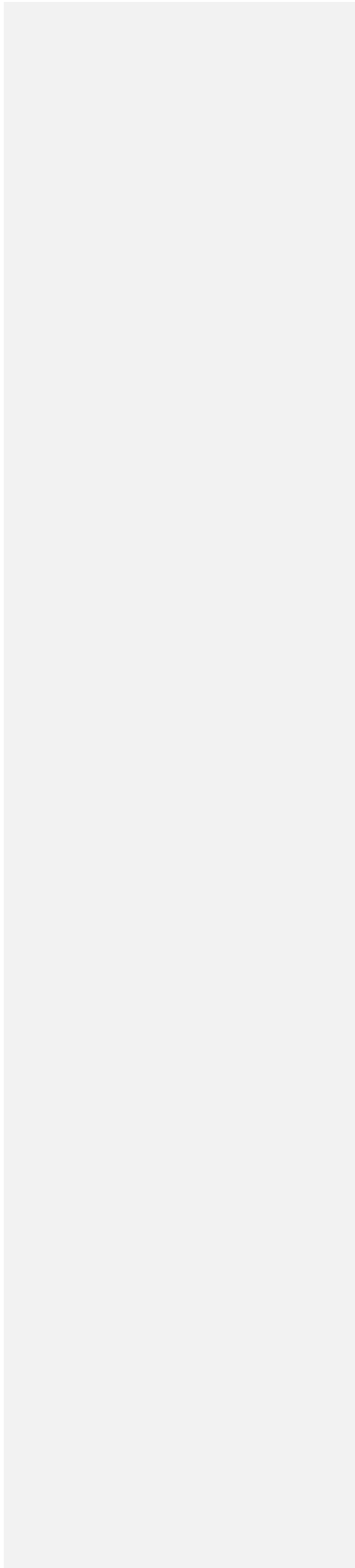
##### (a) Positively

His apologetic works are a powerful statement of the superior rationality of theism over atheism and as such serve a useful pre-evangelistic purpose.

##### (b) Negatively

(1) Kung seems enamoured with the scientific method and its success, he relies (uncritically) on the historical-critical method of research. This seems for him to be in practice a higher authority than the witness of the New Testament to Jesus. The real Jesus is available only to historical criticism.

(2) This leads to the earthly pole of the existential horizon dominating the results of theological investigation. No room is left for the downward thrust of God's revealing power. (Almost the opposite of Barth)





## 1340 COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 2 Week 3 A: LIBERATION THEOLOGY

#### A. BLACK THEOLOGY:

##### 1. Introduction.

The term refers to a theological movement that emerged among North American black people in the late '60s and early '70s. Its context was the every day struggle of black Christians as an oppressed minority in the United States. As such, it is an 'engaged theology.' Links can be made with Bonhoeffer, but unlike the European Protestant situation there was no need to make the idea of God intelligible to black people. Rather it was a case of the relevance of the gospel to a particular social situation.

##### 2. Roots of Black Theology

###### a. The civil rights movement:

- \* Proponents were involved in this struggle.
  - \* Were not university professors
  - \* A Christian theological reflection on the black struggle for justice and liberation largely defined by the life and thoughts of Martin Luther King Jnr
  - \* Conservative Christians denied such connections, up until the mid '60s
- liberal
- Christians were inactive.
- \* Research indicated a long history of struggles and that this had always been located in black churches.
  - \* Deliberate distortions to justify slavery and oppression: 'white religion', 'whitianity.'

###### b. 'Black Religion'

- \* The title of a book by Joseph Washington (1964).
- \* A distinctive black religion could be placed alongside Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism and secularism.
- \* Black religion existed as such because of racist segregation, black churches were not real churches so could not possess a real theology.

- \* Washington advocated integration into white churches.

c. The black power movement

- \* This was a secular movement with leaders like Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael (c.1963-1966). It advocated violence as a means to achieve justice. Despite pressure from white Christians the black leadership in the churches refused to denounce black power as un-Christian,. Instead they denounced white racism and began to develop a black theology of liberation.

3. Black Theology as Liberation Theology.

The first book on militant black theology was written by James Cone in 1969. A Black Theology of Liberation (1970) defined the gospel in terms of liberation. 'Christian theology is a theology of liberation. 'Black power is not only consistent with the theology of Jesus Christ, but... it is the theology of Jesus Christ.' It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in the light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ.' This involves a black reading of the Bible, hearing of the Word, apprehension of Jesus, etc. God in Christ is always on the side of the poor and deprived. To obey God today is to identify with blackness. Affirmation of blackness is a discovery of wholeness; rather than a curse. Black theology affirms black history as theologically significant. Hence, talk of a 'black' Jesus, a 'black' gospel, 'God is a Negro' and so on. God is oppressed with his people. The goal is a liberation denied to black by white Christianity. Jesus can only be experienced as liberator by whites if they become black. Other black theologies criticised Cone for overlooking reconciliation as central to the gospel or being too dependent on white theology. His claim that liberation was the central core of the gospel in Scripture and black religious history was however affirmed. The political meaning of liberation is best illustrated by Exodus and its eschatological meaning by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Black theologians have entered into partnership with other forms of liberation theology in (South) Africa, Latin America and Asia. There is also a black feminist theology. It has been in the context of black theology dialogue with third world theologies that they see the universal character of the gospel to have been reaffirmed, for black Christians believe that no one can be free until all are free.

4. Comments

a. Positively

Black theology represents an appropriate application of the gospel to a particular human situation, racism and oppression. It correctly moved away from the individualistic emphasis of most modern theology to embrace the social sphere.

b. Negatively

- (1) Ethnocentric - focussed on one racial and cultural group of people in contrast to the universalistic dimensions of the gospel eg. Ephesians 2.
- (2) Hermeneutically inadequate - interpreted the Bible in terms of black history rather than by its own categories.
- (3) As a theology 'from below' it limited the divine transcendence.

## B. LATIN - AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

### 1. Introduction.

In 1968 the R.C. bishops of South America met in conference at Medellin, Columbia. In recognising that South America was one of the most 'Christian' countries and one of the most inhumane, they stated: 'in many places in Latin America there is a situation of injustice which must be recognised as institutionalised violence, because the existing structures violate people's basic rights: a situation which calls for far reaching, daring, urgent, and profoundly innovating changes.' Although the bishops recognised the dangers of violent revolution they saw it justified in extreme situations. Their statement, which in a sense gave 'permission' for the development of Liberation Theology in the Latin American RC Church, grew out of a recognition that the distinctive Latin American problem was not the underdevelopment attendant on colonialism (as in Africa), but a financial dependence on the First World supported by local oligarchies (ruling elite) which kept the mass of people in poverty. Liberation Theology received stimulus from Vatican II, the theology of Moltmann and the 'political theology' of the RC scholar Johannes Metz, with their criticisms of the ahistorical and individualistic emphases of existentialism. Even more significant were the ideas and activities of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

Freire took up the ideas of the Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara. He said he and his men spoke to the village people about their lives, and that was the revolution. Unless the people understand why things are as they are, unless they come to see themselves as capable of initiating and participating in change, then nothing can be achieved. This work, the freeing of the mind, is the most fundamental level of liberation, it is termed 'conscientization'. As these marginals, these objects within another's world, come to life there is a spiritual birth leading to a new appropriation of the word of God in the Bible, a new spirituality in the life of prayer, freedom from religious dependence. The marginals come to appreciate the nature of injustice and inequality and ask to live as human beings. This is resisted and revolution becomes necessary.

Most Latin American Liberation Theologians are Catholics: Gustavo Gutierrez, Jose Porfirio Miranda, Juan Luis Segundo, Leonardo Boff, Jose Sobrino. The most influential Protestant theologians are Jose Miguez Bonino (Methodist) and Ruben Alves (Presbyterian). In recent years some Evangelical scholars have taken up the theme of biblical liberation eg. Thomas Hanks.

### 2. G. Gutierrez.

Gutierrez who lives and works in a Lima slum wrote A Theology of Liberation (1971). It remains the most authoritative exposition of Liberation Theology. There are a number of major themes in this work:

a. Theology must be contextual.

The objectivity of knowledge is denied. All theologians bring to their work a socio-cultural framework of implicit interpretation. Claims to a 'universal theology' reflect abstract Hellenistic thinking (idealistic, philosophical) rather than the practical (concrete, present) contextual thinking of Scripture. Any theological model that locates the meaning and purpose of history outside the concrete historical "now" is idealistic. Since this does not rise above the empirical it spontaneously fulfils a function of preservation of the established order. North Atlantic theologies are unsuitable for the Latin American situation which is not one of secularism but de-humanisation. Not, 'where is the supernatural God in a secular world?', but 'where is the God of the righteousness in a world of injustice?' 'Our question is how to tell the non-person, the victim, the non-human that God is love, and that this love makes us all brothers and sisters.' The struggle is with inhumanity, not with unbelief.

Traditional theology attempted to deduce by reason alone (based on Scripture) ethical principles for practical action. Liberation Theology starts its reflection with the concrete Latin American situation of oppression. This is 'not so much a new theme for reflection but a new way to do theology.' For the Church to be neutral is to take the side of the oppressors.

b. God takes the side of the poor.

'the poor deserve preference not because they are morally or religiously better than others, but because God is God, in whose eyes "the last are first".' God is always opposed to oppression and identifies with the poor. Because of God's preferential option for the poor theology and mission arise.

c. Theology as critical reflection on praxis.

Theology is to be done rather than learned. Theology is 'a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word of God.' It is from the position of prior active involvement (praxis) on behalf of the poor that the theologian does his reflection. This is 2 way traffic of action and reflection, a dialectical engagement with the world in transforming action. 'Theology does not produce pastoral activity - rather it reflects upon it...it tries to be part of the process through which the world is formed'. Praxis is the precondition for knowledge cf. John 7:17. Only in this way can truth be known, for true knowledge is never detached, it seeks to change the world. Knowledge of God comes in and through obedient commitment to God's own project for the poor. This is the epistemic privilege of the poor. Gutierrez stresses 'conversion to the neighbour', for 'the poor man, the other, reveals the totally Other to us'. The Word of God orients and guides praxis but does not judge it. Revelation is tied to God's liberating action on behalf of his people. Praxis and theory develop together, but the primacy belongs to praxis.

Biblical study is approached from the perspective of the oppressed. The biblical accounts, such as the Exodus, become not so much the source of theological norms but models feeding the action – reflection cycle.

d. Marxist analysis.

Action cannot be blind. Marxism supplies the analytical tools to understand the class struggle, the exploitative role of capitalism, the need for revolutionary struggle. This entails a commitment to socialism. Marx is correct in arguing that that human wholeness can only be realized through overcoming the alienating political and economic structures of society. Liberation theology agrees with Marxism that traditional Christianity is ideological and supports the status quo.

The use of Marx is defended on the grounds that Christian theology has always relied on pagan philosophers (Plato, Aristotle etc) and that political neutrality is impossible.

e. Salvation as integral liberation.

The question today about salvation is not quantitative but qualitative, not who will be saved (how many) but what is the nature of salvation. As the sacred and secular cannot be divided salvation must be interpreted as social transformation. Salvation is the action of God and humans working together within history to bring about the full humanisation of all relationships. The history of salvation approximates the salvation of history, in the Exodus, life of Jesus etc. The announcement of the kingdom brings a realization of brotherhood and justice pointing to the future hope of a complete communion of all with God. The political or temporal is grafted into the eternal. What happens now in political terms assumes the sort of eternal significance which we usually have only assigned to personal manifestations of the new creation, like the fruit of the Spirit.

God calls us to believe that the justice and brotherhood of his kingdom are ‘something possible, that efforts to bring it about are not in vain.’ ‘faith teaches that every human act which is orientated towards a construction of a more just society has value in terms of communion with God.’ As economic, social and political conditions are humanized, God is revealed.

Eschatology determines human history now. ‘The commitment to the creation of a just society and, ultimately, to a new man, presupposes confidence in the future.’ History is no longer as it was for the Greeks, an *anamnesis* a remembrance. It is rather a thrust into the future. The world is full of latent possibilities and expectations.’ This is the outworking of the increasingly more definite promises made by God through history, from Abraham to Christ. Because the Promise is the self communication of God which dominates history, ‘it illuminates and fructifies the future of humanity and leads it through incipient realizations towards its fulness.’

f. Christian mission as liberating praxis.

Evangelism announces God's participation in the human struggle for justice. This is the revelation of God's commitment to transform history. Jesus exemplifies this by his love, forgiveness and relationship with the Father. Hence the incarnation is interpreted relationally, not ontologically. The cross is not vicarious wrath bearing, but the historicising of the suffering experienced by God in all the crosses of the oppressed.

The mission of the Church is to be a sacrament or sign of salvation in such a way as to effect conscientization and transform society towards the Kingdom of God. It is recognised that the kingdom can only come in full as God's gift at the end of history. In the meantime the Church has a prophetic role, this may entail violence as a last resort.

3. L. Boff

Boff is a Brazilian Franciscan who was suspended from teaching for a year by Rome in order that he may revise his opinions, especially on the use of authority in the Church. He later departed the priesthood. This however gained him worldwide publicity and the support of the Brazilian bishops. His writing takes place in the context of Latin American 'base' or 'basic' communities. (Liberation theology is centred at the 'grass roots', rather than universities.) These are intentional communities which seek to love and serve one another and their neighbourhood in a non-hierarchical way. They are mainly composed of poor people. The emphasis is on faith rather than structure, the employment of individual 'charisms', collective decision making, liturgical celebration and joint Bible study, social involvement and ecumenism. In his book Ecclesiology (1986) Boff develops an ecclesiology relevant to base Church communities.

a. Sociological analysis

Concrete existence always involves a tension between communitarian (reciprocal) and societal (unidirectional) characteristics, e.g. police, judiciary, government, army. A classless society cannot endure, institutionalisation ensures its preservation. However institutionalisation always threatens to destroy the communitarian spirit. These two poles must exist in the Church, but the institution exists to uphold the community. There needs to be a hierarchy of roles and responsibilities.

b. Base 'Church' and universal 'Church'.

As the local communities exist with the same goal as the global institution (RC Church): 'to lead all men and women to the full communion of life with the Father and one another, through Jesus Christ, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, by means of the

mediating activity of the church', they constitute an authentic presence of the Catholic Church.

The base communities often exist however without ordained priests and eucharistic celebration. This means a new experience of church has arrived that requires a new ecclesiology. Boff calls this the 'reinvention of the Church'. The Holy Spirit first creates a community without distinction of sex, nation or intelligence. Then hierarchy arises based on difference so that the life of the community may be fostered. Ministry exists for the purpose of fostering unity, whether it be in a base church, a parish, a diocese or the whole church.

c. The institutional form of the Church.

Jesus did not come to found a Church but to preach the Kingdom of God. The Church exists only because Israel rejected Jesus and he has not yet returned. The Holy Spirit called the Apostles to go to the Gentiles and to form communities like that in which they existed themselves. In the present historical situation new institutional forms may arise according to the leading of the Spirit. These include lay monitors at the eucharist and women priests.

Boff's work is an excellent example of the theological method of Liberation Theology. It is sociologically, politically and biblically informed reflection upon the praxis of base Christian communities.

4. Comments.

a. Positively.

1. Prophetic voice on behalf of the oppressed minority of the world. This exposes the hiatus between principle and application in Western theology and its support of the status quo.
2. God's 'preferential option' for the poor seems biblically defensible.
3. Challenge to the bourgeois individualism of most comfortable Western Theology.

b. Negatively

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1984)

Instruction of Certain Aspects of Liberation Theology.



1. This-worldly liberation can make sin seem secondary. (God on the side of the oppressed does not mean the poor as such are Christians. Tends to moral influence views of atonement.)
2. Uncritical use of Marxist ideas leads to a distortion of all Christian doctrines. Master concept of 'class struggle' leads to rejection of all opposing ideas *a priori* as expressive of ruling class interests. Naive neglect of the reality of totalitarian regimes which have come to power by revolutionary means. 'The class struggle as a road toward a classless society is a myth which slows reform and aggravates poverty and injustice'

Other criticism:

3. The idea of a preferential option for the material poor *as such* is unbiblical and suggests prejudice. The poor in the Psalms and the teaching of Jesus are the righteous oppressed.
4. A totally contextual theology is as abstract a possibility as a totally objective theology, one always brings concepts to a situation.
5. Praxis becomes the key authority, rather than Scripture. A pre-understanding of right praxis based on Scripture should precede reflection of praxis itself. If one begins with Marxist pre understanding of social class, God takes a second order role. God however can only be understood on his own terms, not in terms of humanity as such.
6. Tendency to reduce the Kingdom of God to an immanent this-worldly reality, liberation movements. The Bible's depiction of the new creation in Christ, with heaven, hell and the angelic world, is larger than the earthly and political sphere. The coming of the kingdom of God is not continuous with the progress of humanity is social and political terms.
7. God's voice becomes identified with the voice of the poor, the poor are the solution to ignorance of God, rather than Jesus.
8. The hermeneutic of liberation theology tends to be reduced to 'the good of humanity.' This anthropocentricity overlooks that God, not humans, is the measure of all things.

Additional note on Major Theological themes in Liberation Theology.

1. Epistemology: God is not recognised analogically in the beauty and power of creation, but dialectically in the creature's suffering and despair. 'Sorrow triggers cognition.' (Sobrino). God the crucified submerges himself in the world of misery. Hence 'the poor are the authentic theological source for understanding Christian doctrine and practice' (Sobrino).

2. Nature of God: God is not a timeless entity 'squatting' outside the world but a permanent driving force in history, transcending it by a 'permanent cultural revolution.' Jesus is the poor man: surrounded by the poor, preferring the poor, identifying with the poor, killed by the mighty, cf. Magnificat, Luke 1:52-53.
  
3. Liberation theology: in the 'chemical reaction' of faith and oppression liberation theology is born (Boff).
  
4. Enlightenment: liberation theology claims to side step the 2 pronged challenge of the Enlightenment.
  - (1) Kant: autonomy vs revelation. This is solved by positing revelation in the matrix of human interaction with the history.
  - (2) Marx: no wholeness without economic and political change. This premise is subsumed theologically.

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### CREATION SPIRITUALITY

#### 1. Introduction.

The founder and principle author of Creation Spirituality is the Dominican priest Matthew Fox. Fox's early work was done on the relationship of spirituality and culture. He is an expert on the medieval mystics Hildegard of Bingen, Mechtild of Magdaberg and especially Meister Eckhart. Eckhart's teaching was condemned after his death by the Roman Catholic Church as pantheistic. Fox began writing in the early '70s and established a centre for creation spirituality in California. His *Original Blessing* (1983) drew world wide attention. He is particularly influential amongst Western Catholics. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith investigated Fox's writings in 1984. In 1988 Fox was ordered to cease leading his institute (for example, he had a witch on staff) and was banned from all teaching and public appearances for a period of nine months. This only served to increase his popularity. In 1994 he moved to the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A.

#### 2. The Creation - Centred Spiritual Tradition

This tradition is the oldest spirituality in the Bible. The Yahwist (J) author of Genesis is creation-centred, as is much of the historical books, the prophets and wisdom literature as well as Job and the Song of Songs. The New Testament is rich in Creation Spirituality - the birth narratives of Jesus, the creation parables of Jesus, Paul's hymns to the Cosmic Christ. Many Eastern Orthodox theologians follow this course. Western Creation - Centred spiritual theologians include Irenaeus, Pelagius, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, George Fox, Teilhard de Chardin, R.R. Reuter and Jon Sabrino. The 'new physics' and ecological consciousness have revived interest in the tradition. Outside the biblical tradition the spirituality of native peoples and Taoism are examples of religions which have centred themselves on the Cosmos.

The Creation - Centred spiritual tradition is opposed to Fall - Redemption spiritualities. Augustine is the key spokesperson for this tradition as it was he who introduced the doctrine of original sin into Western theology. Fall - Redemption theologies are dualistic and theistic, emphasising the difference and separation between human kind and God. They are patriarchal, ascetic, (anti-sexual), penal, (punishing), introspective, (guilt), egocentric, controlling, obsessed with sin and guilt, pessimistic, church-centred, cross-centred, non-prophetic and so on.

### 3. The Spiritual Journey.

The aim of the spiritual journey is to communicate with the creative energy of God. There are four paths, not as a ladder, but a holistic spiral emanating from the core of creation.

#### a. *Via Positiva*: Creation.

This is the love of creation and its components (befriending). It is cosmic awareness, cosmic celebration, cosmic healing. It is an inner not an introspective journey. There is a strong emphasis on enjoyment, passions are a blessing, humility is befriending the earth, trust in nature's cycles, one is to trust the body and recognise our dignity in the kingdom/queendom of God. Theism is rejected, for God is not 'out there'. Pantheism is rejected because it robs God of transcendence. Panentheism avoids the ultimate dualism of theism by speaking of God in us and us in God. It is a way of seeing the world sacramentally. The primary sacrament is creation itself. The sacrament who is Christ and the sacraments make God's presence more visible. As one grows more deeply into the panentheistic awareness, one's need to invoke the actual name of God becomes less compelling. A panentheistic spirituality expresses itself in maternal images eg. enclosure, as in a womb, or under the wings of a mother bird. In many ways the four-fold journey is an unfolding of a panentheistic God.

A Saviour is a healer. Jesus Christ is a creator, present with the Creator from the beginning. He calls us to trust, announcing life not death. He is the vine, the way of fruitfulness. He spoke and taught wisdom, he announced the presence of the kingdom/queendom of God inviting all to royal personhood, especially the poor. Jesus invites all royal persons to be in him as he is in them - a christological panentheism that ends all theisms. He is the cosmic Christ, the start of a new creation drawing all things together into a unity. He personalises our relationship with God, *Abba*.

#### b. *Via Negativa*: Letting go and letting be.

This involves a painful letting go of all images, all names, all role-playing to 'sink' down into darkness where the God 'without a name' dwells and where our depths lie, for 'the ground of the soul is dark' (Eckhart). It is in the pain and solitude of this darkness, in the healthiness of nothingness, that our hearts are broken and so opened to become channels of compassion linking ourselves to others. 'What light is shed on a theology of sin, salvation and Christ as a result of befriending this darkness?'

Sin is the refusal to let go, to be empty in order to receive. Only as we let go can we enter into our Creator God, to make contact with the depth.

Salvation is through pain. Loving our enemies, embracing our fears, entering the darkest of the dark. Forgiveness is another word for letting go - fear, guilt.

The cross is the symbol of the ultimate letting go. It invites us to participate in a process within which we can actually experience history as salvation. Jesus' life represents the fullest creation-centred and deepest of the spiritual journeys of mankind. As Jesus died so the kingdom/queendom of God could come so we must radically let-go. Jesus confronted the fear of death head-on (he let-go of all the messianic images) and so must we, in this we can let-go of all things, all fear of failure, all search for power. God let-go of Jesus on the cross. This frees us of all our projections onto an all-powerful God.

c. Via Creativa: Birthing

This is the apex of Creation Spirituality, the first two paths lead to it and the fourth path flows from it. Through the via creativa we become cocreates like God, it is part of the image of God to be endowed with the divine creative power of birthing. The principle meditation discipline in this tradition is 'extrovert meditation' This involves the development of the artistic, right-brain side of the individual - play, imagination, creativity, art. As we trust our images they are birthed into existence and the shadow side of our human natures are recognised. We become aware of a return to nature which overcomes all dualisms. This involves discipline but excludes asceticism. Our lives become a work of art, we remember God the primary Artist and Creator. Beauty is what our lives are all about. Here we recognise God as Mother, the one from whom we flow and who encloses us. As we birth wisdom and compassion we in turn birth God as child, God's Son. God is always being born in us in the spaces of our creativity, in our non-egotistical 'letting go'. Ours is a created divinity, God's is an uncreated divinity To recover our divinity, our co-creativity with God, is itself redemptive and salvific, for creation is redemption from chaos.

In the birth of Jesus from Mary, 'heavenly queen', the pre-patriarchal spirituality is revived. The fear of motherhood, the suspicion of creativity, the displeasure with birthing processes are exposed. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary so holy birth happens within us. Jesus was a poet, a storyteller, an artist, not a priest or theologian. He was an awakener of the sacrament of the cosmos, of the kingdom/queendom of God in which all persons are immersed and which immerses all persons. He is a model of extrovert meditation, a true son of God. The release of the divine Creative Word through human creativity (not the wiping away of original sin) is the primary focus of the Incarnation. Jesus awakens our divine creativity and forgives the guilt which hampers our giving birth. He is the New Adam, the beautiful one who represents the inner beauty of the person. His resurrection announces the victory of beauty over ugliness. He sends the spirit to free us from all perverse creativity-sadism, masochism or the 'I can't' and 'you can't'. By God's grace and gift immense dignity and power are ours. His crucifixion is his invitation to be courageous enough to create, to pay the price of the pains of birthing which must accompany the ecstasy of birth.

d. Via Transformativa: New Creation of Compassion and Social Justice.

Contemplation cannot be divorced from action. The Holy Spirit is birthing a New Creation, a global civilisation based on new images and a restructured society. We are to cooperate with God as co-creators in this work of transformation. Faith means trust in our prophetic vocations to build a New Creation by the power of God. This means opposition to militarism, sexism, racism, dualism and justice for women, gays, animals, Third World peoples. The spirituality of the 'little ones' - feminists, Third World, lay and other oppressed peoples is a spirituality of imagination, celebration, nature and creation. It is panentheistic and democratic. Creation spirituality embraces the whole of life - nature, science, economics, politics, sexuality. All these are sources of revelation.

'Be you compassionate, as your Creator is compassionate' (Luke 6:36). Compassion was the most important word in Jesus' vocabulary. This means interdependence, right relationship. It means two basic kinds of action - celebration and justice. We are to celebrate the Creator of Eros, the pleasure of all good, the One who loves to play, to rediscover the child in ourselves. Only a civilisation that fosters erotic celebration can usher in a new era of justice-making. Compassion is a response to the interconnectedness of our world. It is in the overcoming of distance that transformation happens.

Injustice is coldness of heart, the use of creativity to dominate others, to kill, to be sadistic, to refuse to celebrate. It threatens the harmony of the earth itself. Behind it lies the sin of dualism and privatised religion. The New Creation represents a New Exodus. Justification is a social event - the bringing together of people, the breaking down of walls. Compassion brings (this) salvation. Jesus, who is a new creation, calls all persons to reconciliation with themselves, one another and creation. To love, forgive and recognise the divine beauty. In his death Jesus killed the hostility, the dualism which sets people apart (Eph.2:13-17). He has left his Spirit to bring about the New Creation.

#### 4. Comments.

##### a. Positively:

- i Correctly reminds us of the negativity and depreciation of the value of human persons in those theological traditions which place sin and guilt in a central role.
- ii Correctly reminds us of the need for celebration, love and compassion, that God made everything to be enjoyed.
- iii Correctly emphasises the impossibility of spiritual growth without pain and loss.
- Iv Correctly emphasises the need for radical justice on a social and global scale.

##### b. Negatively:

- i Panentheism limits the transcendence of God eg creation *ex nihilo*. At times seems only verbally different from pantheism. Ignores the distinction between dualism as opposition and dualism/duality as complementarity.
- ii Master concept seems to be Cosmos/Creation rather than God in the traditional sense. Grace is immanentised. This inevitably leads in the direction of a nature religion which is ahistorical and pre-Christian, of the sort explicitly condemned by the prophets.(Baal)
- iii Christ becomes a principle not a person. The Christ becomes incarnate in Jesus, Moses, Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Ghandi, you and me. The historical details of Jesus' life have only a symbolic value, he is the most perfect model for humanity. There is no place for wrath, judgement, heaven, hell etc in traditional eschatological-transcendent terms because these presuppose a personal God separate from us and a radical in-breaking of another order of reality into our own.
- Iv Anthropology is reactionary. Optimistic, no doctrine of depravity - sin is misuse of good gifts. Whatever is natural (according to science and anthropology) must be good eg.homosexuality.
- v Creation spirituality must be branded a Christian(?) heresy.

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 4B: FEMINIST THEOLOGY

#### 1. Introduction.

The roots of feminist theology can be traced back to the writing of Christian women in nineteenth century America who criticised the prevailing view that the Bible gave men power over women. Quaker women and Salvationists were notable for their place in the Christian church; these were able to minister to men. Cf. temperance societies. In the dynamic milieu of the 1960s voices were raised concerning female consciousness and equal opportunity. More radical opinions came from Marxists who argued for the end of the family and monogamous marriage. Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch (1971) marked the emergence of a type of feminism which set out the relationship between the sexes in oppositional terms and at times advocated lesbianism. It was inevitable against the background of these wider cultural changes that a feminist theology would develop. It was no doubt assisted by the rise of a black consciousness and theology in the U.S. with its focus on oppression.

Feminist theology is not a unitary school.

Some of its advocates have abandoned Christianity on the basis of the belief that the Bible is inherently patriarchal eg. Mary Daly. They are 'rejectionist' and post-Christian. They have sought ancient religions with female symbols for the divine in order to combine this with their own experience and reflection. Mainstream (liberal or 'reformist') feminists wish to affirm the possibility of a feminist theology within the Judaeo - Christian tradition. They seek to uncover the more fundamental meaning of concepts of God, Christ, human personhood, sin and redemption that can criticise the deformation of these concepts as tools of male domination. This is not a theological reflection on certain 'feminine' themes but an attempt to re-read the Christian tradition in the light of the spiritual experience of women. This is the norm for interpreting what is 'true' and 'false' in the Christian tradition. That which does not support the equality of women in creation and redemption is judged to be unfaithful to the original vision of redemption in Christ held by the early Church and is rejected as deficient. Eg. R.R.Ruether, E.S.Fiorenza, both of whom are Roman Catholics. A very small minority of feminist writers work within the evangelical tradition of submission to biblical authority ('loyalists'). They wish to affirm the positive elements in feminism by examining those things in the Scripture which have been culturally misinterpreted. Eg. E.Storkey.



## 2. Theological Method.

Feminist theology operates with a 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. It is assumed that the Bible; written, translated, canonised and interpreted by men, shares the androcentric misogynist values of the culture of its time. For example, the laws of purity about child birth and menstruation, divorce laws, wives as 'property'. The task of the feminist theologian is to identify this bias and to recover the true meaning of the text (reconstruction).

Ruether aims to strip away the 'mystifications of objectified divine and universal authority' which, sociologically speaking, is simply a mask for male dominance. Influenced by Liberation Theology she finds the source of the feminist critical principle by which texts are to be judged in the 'prophetic-liberating' tradition of Scripture. Scripture is used to criticise Scripture, this is a form of the 'canon within a canon' approach of Luther on James. Jesus is the historical paradigm for the prophetic-liberating tradition. He proclaims the gospel to despised people, including women. Women were the first ('unlawful') witnesses to the Resurrection. His vision was of an egalitarian and non-hierarchical society. Since we have no record of a time in the past, or a text, which does not subjugate women the process of tradition formation on the basis of revelation is a continuum, 'feminist theology must stand as a new midrash (a form of Jewish exposition of the Old Testament) or a third covenant, that...makes a new beginning, in which the personhood of women is no longer at the margins but at the Centre.' Revelation continues in the re-evaluation of the tradition by new story telling. This means dialogue with the Bible, the foundational memory of the tradition.

Fiorenza is even more radical. There is no aspect of classical Christianity which can function as the norm for theology, even the life of Jesus is interwoven with the oppressive culture of his day. A feminist framework is based on the 'radical assumption that gender is socially, politically, economically, and theologically constructed' in such a way as to 'perpetuate the patriarchal exploitation and oppression of all women.' Her critical principle is that which promotes the full humanity of women. Whatever does this is Word of God and salvific, whatever does not cannot be taken as inspired. The hermeneutic - centre for a feminist theology is a movement of self-identified women and women-identified men whose commitment and mission is one of solidarity with women suffering the triple oppressions of sexism, racism and poverty. This is Women-Church. It is women's experience of oppression which gives them privileged hermeneutical status. The Bible is a source for recovering the impulse of God's liberating action in the world in as much as it records the 'memory of struggle, life and leadership of biblical women who spoke and acted in the power of the Spirit' in the midst of their suffering. The Bible itself was 'written with the intention of serving the needs of the communities of faith and not of revealing timeless principles or transmitting historically accurate records'. Just as the Bible authors rewrote their traditions in the context of their communities we must do the same. This is how the Scriptures become salvific in our experience.

### 3. Reconstruction of Christian theology. (Ruether)

#### a. Anthropology.

The doctrine of creation has been used to support male domination. Jesus' maleness is evidence that manhood is normative and womanhood derivative. Mary, unlike Eve, is the model of female submissiveness. Behind the Christian traditions of exploitation lies a dualist anthropology - women are correlated with matter, body, creation, immanence, evil; maleness is identified with 'higher nature', spirit, soul or reason, transcendence, redemption, good. Many early Fathers (Tertullian, Augustine, etc) followed Aristotle, women are less human than men. Aquinas taught that Jesus was necessarily male. Ruether denies this dualism and sees it as the fundamental ground of patriarchal oppression. We need to affirm all persons in the full and equivalent human nature and personhood, as male and female. Women as women and men as men equally possess the fulness of human nature, they are not complementary halves. Male and female roles, apart from the most basic biological roles of reproduction, are primarily of social origin. 'women want to tear down the wall that separate the self and society into "male" and "female" spheres. This demands not just a new integrated self but a new integrated social order.' This anthropology becomes the starting point for Ruether's investigation of theological themes.

#### b. Sin and evil.

Only after one has been converted away from patriarchy can the true character of sin be perceived by a critical consciousness. Sin is not simply individual but refers to a fallen state of humanity. Sexism is a primary example of our fallenness, replacing patterns of sharing (female) with dominance (male). Eve is a scapegoat responsible for the entry of evil into the world. Once this myth is rejected the basis for male privilege and authority is undercut. Although both sexes have the capability for evil in practice men have been responsible for more evil in the world because of their positions of power. Redemption means new human relationships based on mutual cooperation.

#### c. God

For dominant Christianity, God is an absolutised male ego, viz. self-sufficient, non relational, sovereign power. The trinity represents a patriarchal hierarchy of Father and Son. This contrasts with the feminine language for God, e.g. Sophia, in the Old Testament. 'God is both male and female and neither male nor female.' God is Spirit. To speak of God as Father or Mother is to perpetuate a patriarchal image of parenthood which keeps women away from their autonomy. Ruether returns to Tillich's concept of God as the ground of being, the 'primal Matrix' or 'God/ess'. The God/ess embraces all dualities in a dynamic unity, there is no 'great chain of being' (ontological pyramid) but all reality is radically equal. (This seems to be a form of monism.) What can be said about God arises out of feminine experience. 'the liberating encounter with

God/ess is always an encounter with our authentic selves resurrected from underneath the alienated self.’

d. Christology

A major problem for feminist theology is how a male Saviour can liberate women. Dominant Christianity, with Jesus the Son of God, extols the capacity of men to represent God. One needs to divest Jesus of the Jewish mythology of Messiahship and the Hellenistic *Logos* imagery both of which are masculine. What emerges is an account of Jesus as a liberator who denounced the power and status relationships which define privilege. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God as a community free from hierarchy and dualisms. He related openly to women, e.g. the woman with the flow of blood, the Samaritan, the Syro-Phoenician, Mary, the witnesses at the tomb. Jesus is the Christ in the sense that he represented the new humanity and served as its forerunner. ‘The Christian community continues Christ’s identity.’ This is a functional Christology.

4. Comments.

a. Positively.

- i. Has pointed out that the assumptions which have often been taken to the Bible text are patriarchal.
- ii. Has provoked a fresh examination of many parts of Scripture.
- iii. Has led to repentance in various parts of the Church concerning the treatment of women and the release of women in ministry.

b. Negatively.

- i. Elevates the experience of one group of human beings to a position beyond criticism i.e. to the status of the Word of God. This is a problem even in terms of the presuppositions of feminist theology itself. The theologians do not take into account the full range of women’s discourses of faith, for example, black Pentecostal women preachers. The liberal academic framework becomes totalising, there is only one way of being church.
- ii. Denies the transcendence of God.
- iii. Leads, more or less, to a theological movement which is a resurgence and a projection of the particularities of feminine consciousness ie Feuerbach and Freud prove correct.
- iv. The focus on the Bible is on covenant, not gender issues. However, revelation in scripture is progressive in relation to the eschaton; there is accommodation, such as in the case of polygamy and ‘veils’.
- v. To deny that Jesus can be the Saviour of women because he had only male experiences is to deny the inclusive nature of the incarnation and atonement. Jesus’ masculinity is not to be understood as any more limiting than his Jewishness or first century context. It is the person of the Word who has taken up humanity in the full spectrum of its forms and reconciled it to God. To

suggest otherwise would be to introduce basic ontological distinctions within humanity which would require a plurality of redeemers.

### **Extra Note: Feminist Diversity.**

Feminism: The movement toward equal rights, equal status, and equal opportunity for men and women in a male dominated culture.

Feminist: A person, male or female, who favours the abolishment of gender-based roles in society, the home and church. Within the category called feminist, there are many spiritual beliefs represented.

New Age feminists: Pagans who are involved in the worship of a female deity of goddess.

Secular feminists: Humanists who disallow God, revelation and religion in the discussion of feminism. They view the Bible as the source of chauvinism.

Liberal Christian feminists: Those who operate with a Christian framework and who believe that the writers were simply men of their times who were limited in their perspectives. They use a hermeneutic that sifts out anything that is offensive to women.

Evangelical (Biblical feminists): Those who believe the Bible is authoritative and must be understood but who also embrace the feminist ideal of abolishing gender-based roles in society, church and the home. Evangelical feminists in general will argue that:

The equality of women is affirmed by scripture.

Jesus was a feminist.

Female subordination was a result of sin.

Galatians 3:28 is not limited to their spiritual standing before God but refers to the practical working out of that standing in society.

Mutual submission is taught by Ephesians 5:21-24.

Head may not mean “authority over” but “source of”.

Paul does not teach one thing and practice another.

Scripture teaches that role is based on gifts rather than gender.

Sex roles (biology) should not be confused with gender roles (society).

### **Extra Note: Women And Sin**

Where evil is defined in terms of the systemic structures or patterns of oppression in economic, social and political life, sin is necessarily seen in terms of acts which create or reinforce such structures. Characteristic 'women's sin' become: psychological paralysis, feminine antifeminism, false humanity, emotional dependence, lack of creativity and so on (Mary Daly). The root of sin is sexism itself.

This however, apart from its (culture, intensive) totalising claims, is an attempt to reshape the bible by making it accommodate an extra-biblical narrative depiction . Barth's hamartiology opens up a radical critique of this (feminist) view of sin.

(see C.D. IV/2). Pride and sloth, action and inaction form an inseparable unity based on humanity's hatred of God. indifference is apart of this. What is being played out is an attempt at self-definition, and so an avoidance of Christ. The effects of the fall are entirely equalising for all people.

To ignore these sorts of insights is to make sin fundamentally a gender - relational problem and not an issue with God. Making self-assertion a goal of sanctification can only generate guilt and chronic self-assessment. The gospel of justification by grace through faith alone is denied. (See S.J.T., 50,4, 1997, pp. 415 ff).

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 2 Week 5: MISSION THEOLOGY

#### A: CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

##### 1. Introduction

The twentieth century has witnessed a sustained challenge to the traditional Christian manner of dealing with the people of other religions. There is now a bewildering range of views held by Christians concerning the status of other faiths. This can be attributed to a variety of factors.

- a. A decline in European self-confidence and power due to war and economic factors.
- b. The availability of non-Christian literature; translations from the late nineteenth century on.
- c. Personal contact with holy and moral people of other religions due to migration and travel. This often undid superstition.
- d. A revival in the teaching and influence of other world religions eg. Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, the missionary mode of Islam.
- e. Changes in the theological climate, especially a questioning of the historicity and authority of the Bible.

The prevailing intellectual climate in Western society has become one of relativism.

- Cultural relativism - each religion is an expression of its own culture and appropriate to that place. Christianity is European.
- Historical relativism - the continual expansion of knowledge, especially science, makes it impossible to commit totally to a past set of beliefs.
- Epistemological relativism - it is only ever possible to know the truth for us, or as the truth appears to us. This picks up on Kant's epistemology. If reality consists of interaction between noumena and our cognitive structure, then, since the latter is shaped through culture, diversity of cultures must mean diverse interpretations of the one reality.

There are a number of possible responses.

## 2. Inclusivism

This is the favoured approach of certain Liberal Christians who want to maintain the centrality of Christ whilst at the same time denying that sincere believers of other faiths will be lost eg. K. Rahner, H.Kung, R. Pannikar, W. Cantwell-Smith, Dom Bede Griffiths. Christ is the concrete historical expression of God's universal forgiving love. Jesus is the gift of God revealed. The ontological necessity of Christ's atonement is distinguished from the epistemological situation of sinners.

'a Buddhist who is saved, or a Muslim, Hindu or whoever, is saved only because God is the kind of God whom Jesus Christ revealed Him to be.' (Cantwell-Smith).

'the good and *bona fide* Hindu is saved by Christ and not by Hinduism, but it is through the sacraments of Hinduism, through the message of morality and the good life, through the mysteries which come down to him through Hinduism, that Christ saves the Hindu normally.' (Pannikar)

Usually this is coupled with an affirmation that salvation is by faith alone, and that God's plan is centred on humanity rather than the Church. The traditional *logos* doctrine of illuminating Christ is used to describe the working of Jesus in other religions. Dialogue rather than confrontation is encouraged.

Moltmann sees this dialogue as a concrete expression of life in love. The finality of Christ is not something we possess but a promise that we are given. Christians believe in a God who can suffer and who in the power of his love desires to suffer in order to redeem. Therefore, in their dialogue with people of a different faith, Christians cannot testify through their behaviour to an unalterable, apathetic and aggressive God. By giving love and showing interest in others, they also become receptive to the other and vulnerable through what is alien to them. They can bear the otherness of the other without becoming insecure and hardening their hearts. The right thing is not to carry on the dialogue according to superficial rules of communication, but to enter into it out of the depths of the understanding of God.

More recently an evangelical approach to inclusivism has been championed by Clark Pinnock cf. S. Grenz, J Sanders. He claims that in a hierarchy of revealed truths, God's universal salvific will occupies a primary place on the list. This is a "wider hope" theory. The covenant God made with Noah embraces those like Job, Melchizedek, Abimelech, Jethro, Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, the Queen of Sheba, the Magi, Cornelius and so on. God may save those who respond to the only light that they have had access to. There is a *via media* that avoids Barth's blanket rejection of the religions and Rahner's optimism that the religions are divinely appointed ways of salvation. Discernment is required. Recognition of God's saving work in other religions requires listening to the Spirit.

The Spirit is present in other religions before the arrival of any evangelist. This is tied in Pinnock's thinking with the rejection of the *filioque* clause. The Spirit is not tied to the Christ – event exclusively. He is at work in humanity's search for meaning generally. While Christ safeguards the particularity of God, the Spirit safeguards universality. Redemptive bridges exist into other religions. Traces of Jesus which reveal the presence of the Spirit include self – sacrificing love, care about community, longings for justice, forgiveness and so on.



God rewards all who seek him and accepts everyone who fears him and does what is right. With C.S. Lewis, Pinnock believes that God is leading people to focus on truths within their own religions which are positive and can eventually put them in touch with Christ. God never leaves himself without a witness. Just because Jesus is the decisive revelation of God does not mean that there is no truth outside of him. God was revealing his truth to people long before Jesus was born. Augustine used neo – Platonism, Aquinas employed Aristotle and Calvin the humanist resources of the Renaissance. Whatever is true is pleasing to God. The issue is the direction of a person's life towards the kingdom, not theological correctness, as in the case of the good Samaritan. "I believe that Jesus is the criterion for of salvation both ethically and theologically, and that it is possible for those who have not known him to do the works of love which correspond to God's kingdom and participate in salvation at the last judgment."

### 3. Pluralism

Many of the major intellectual figures who originally popularised inclusivism (Pannikar, Cantwell-Smith, John Hick) found the logic of their own position led them to a full blown religious pluralism, cf. also N.Smart,P.Knitter. This view sees the inclusivist position as an expression of Christian paternalism and an insult to members of other faiths. A sort of subtle theological imperialism. Additionally, there is no place for sinners and lawbreakers in this moralistic scheme. Why might not someone turn Rahner's scheme upside down and speak of Christians as 'anonymous Buddhists' etc?

There is one divine reality inadequately known to us all. As Ghandhi said: 'all religions were right, but everyone of them imperfect, imperfect naturally and necessarily - because they were interpreted with our poor intellects, sometimes with our poor hearts and more often misinterpreted.' God is beyond our limited conceptions.

Hick argues that to present Jesus as the centre of salvation of the human race presents a distorted picture of God's love for all humanity. 'It is not a morally or religiously acceptable view that salvation depends upon being a member of the Christian minority of the human race.' God would not be just to exclude people on the basis of time, culture and race. He argues that in the same way as the Ptolemaic system of the universe needed rejecting, so the doctrine that makes Christ the centre of salvation for humanity needs radical revision to a Copernican system of theology in which the divine reality, called by us 'God', becomes the centre. If God is the ultimate goal of all religions non-Christians can reach this goal following their own ways. A long tradition of worship that has sustained the faith of millions represents a genuine encounter with divine reality. We need to consider an overlap of lived faith, rather than theology. He suggests that both inclusivism and exclusivism are doctrines developed by the Church and cannot be traced back to the historical Jesus. Christian affirmations about Jesus are not ontological but poetic language of love for the one through whom Christians have come to know God.

#### 4. Exclusivism.

This is the traditional Christian position regarding the relationship between Jesus Christ and salvation. Hope for eternal life depends on faith in Christ, members of other religions needed to be converted to Christ. Finality means closure.

Barth attacked religion as a human construct (C.D. I/2 301 f etc). He accepted the projection theory of Feuerbach, but with a difference - he affirmed the revelation of God in Christ. God as Wholly Other reveals himself, and is not dependent on anything human for this which reveals the judgement and grace of God. Religion is unbelief, it is the great concern of godless man to justify himself. Brunner took up a similar position. Hendrik Kraemer (The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, 1938) stressed the discontinuity between the gospel and non-Christian systems of salvation. The latter are man's attempts to raise himself to the divine. Nevertheless God reveals himself to all people in nature and conscience so that there is at one and the same time vain religious imaginings and groping after a dimly known God. Satan is also at work turning the best into the worst. The good and the bad live side by side interlaced together. The only solution is the Saviour God revealed in the Bible. cf. also the writings of S. Neill and L. Newbiggin (who ministered in India).

#### 5. Comments.

##### a. Positively

- i Critiques of traditional mission theology have served to expose Euro-centrism and raised the question of Christ's universal significance more sharply.
- ii. Dialogue and sensitivity rather than confrontation and superiority are seen to be a more Christian way of dealing with other religious people.

##### b. Negatively

- i. The approach of alternatives to exclusivism depends on an historical relativism which denies that the Word of God has come to us clearly in Jesus Christ as recorded in the Scriptures.
- ii. This is often accompanied by a pneumatology that is creation-based rather than rooted in the eschatological events of Christ's redemptive acts. 'The Spirit is not an 'independent itinerant evangelist' (Vanhoozer). (Ultimately, all pluralistic theologies deny that the importance of the distinctions in the trinity, which are constitutive of the ground of salvation. To recognise this would be to develop a genuine inclusivist theology.)

- iii. It is difficult to specify a set of criteria whereby those who are saved in other religions may be recognised. Is belief in a supreme being essential, what is the scope of ethical commitment necessary? The problem for inclusivists is to identify grace in non - Christian religions. This can be done using Christian criteria, which strips the other religions of their uniqueness, or if it uses the concepts and categories of the particular religions it denies that which is distinctly Christian. Any attempt to put together neutral descriptive categories can be criticised as departing from the sole sufficiency of Christ.
- iv. If inclusivism were true we should expect to see a greater receptivity to the message of Jesus from those who are 'anonymous Christians' ie. the more devout members of other religions.
- v. The vagueness associated with inclusivism opens the door to uncritical acceptance of the validity of the religious and spiritual experiences of other traditions. This may lead towards pluralism.
- vi. Pluralistic epistemology drives us not in the direction of religion but practical atheism.
- vii. Religious pluralism in its opposition to classical religious assertions is itself an anti-metanarrative metanarrative.
- viii. The religious pluralist, in denying other positions, assumes a privilege position outside of any particular context, this is inconsistent with relativism. In doing this it abstracts from actual religious experience.
- ix. Pluralists ignore that they are part of a culture and community of understanding i.e. a post-modernist one.
- x. In principle pluralism is intolerant to all other positions, i.e. exclusivistic.
- xi. The diversity of religions is such that they cannot meaningfully be taken to refer to the same reality, e.g. Buddhism and Christianity, where there is no significant overlap in beliefs about God's nature.
- xii. The analogy of reality chosen (e.g. mountain, elephant) determines the conclusion reached. Why not use another analogy?

## **B: THE LAUSANNE MOVEMENT**

### 1. The Lausanne Congress (1974)

3,000 participants representing Evangelicalism from 150 nations met to discuss the theme 'Let the Earth Hear His Voice'. John Stott and Billy Graham were prominent leaders. Its significance for Evangelicals has been compared to Vatican II. The Congress produced a 15 point Covenant as a confession of faith. It is the most representative and authoritative statement of Evangelical belief in modern times. As a covenant it is a solemn pledge to pray and to work for world-wide evangelisation.

The Congress witnessed to three changes in international Evangelicalism. Firstly, some of the most notable speakers and about half the participants were from the Third World. Secondly, triumphalism was replaced by penitence in the light of past mistakes and the enormity of the task ahead. Thirdly, there was disagreement about the relationship between the gospel and social responsibility. (See article 5. 'Christian Responsibility')

The movement of Lausanne has continued via a number of international conferences and various networks.

### 2. International Congress On World Evangelisation, Manila (1989)

3,500 delegates from 173 nations met with the theme: 'Proclaim Christ until He Comes'.

As with the 1974 Congress non-whites were increasingly dominant. The section on the relationship between the gospel and social justice is more positive. (See article 4. 'The Gospel and Social Responsibility') This time Evangelicals from a Charismatic-Pentecostal background were highly visible, eg. the engagement between J.I. Packer and Jack Hayford.

The Manila Manifesto is a public declaration of convictions, intentions and motives. It contains 21 brief affirmations and 12 sections commended for study by churches.

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 6 : THEOLOGIES OF REVIVAL

#### 1. The meaning and History of Revival

The subject of revival is enormous and attempts to define it multiform. Systematic attempts to understand revival, whether or not the term was used, go back to Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). Patterns of revival can be seen in the Old Testament eg. the rediscovery of the law by Josiah, Hezekiah's reforms, the ministry of Ezra. The whole of the New Testament from the coming of the Spirit in Acts, the expansion and the struggles the Church and the development of her life recorded in the epistles, to the state of the churches recorded in the book of Revelation can be understood in terms of the ebb and flow of the Spirit which constitutes revival. Although historically revivals may seem to come about in a cyclical manner (cf. the book of Judges and the Deuteronomic theology of history) there would seem to be no theological reason why this should need to be the case. With the coming of the Messiah, the gift of the Spirit, forgiveness, adoption of the sonship etc., the people of God should live in 'continuous revival'. In practice what we mean by 'revival' is the restoration of the quality of spiritual life we see in the New Testament Church.

#### 2. Jonathan Edwards.

##### a. Introduction

Edwards succeeded his grandfather Samuel Stoddard as Congregational minister of the Northampton parish in Massachusetts in 1727. Revivalism in America dates back to a series of 6 'harvests' under the preceding ministry, but by Edwards' time the church was 'dry bones'. In 1734-35 there was a revival in the town under his preaching. Edwards became infamous for his sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' 'The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burns like fire... you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours...and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment.' In 1740 another revival was sparked off by the work of George Whitefield. This was part of the First Great Awakening in the United States.

The Puritanism of New England in Edwards' day reacted in different ways to these phenomena. There was much criticism of the revival by Liberal and Unitarian thinkers as being chaotic, emotional enthusiasm or spiritually deceived. Edwards' reply was [A Narrative of Surprising Conversions](#) (1737). In it he shows himself to be both an advocate and critic of revivals. The background to all his teaching is his high Calvinist

stress on the sovereign freedom of God. In A Narrative he has a section on 'The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God.' (see below).

b. Soteriology.

(From M. Jinkins in S.J.T. 48, 2, 1995 pp. 185 ff.)

There is a distinct morphology of conversion determined by Edwards' conception of the *ordo salutis*. He advocates 3 stages in the salvation experience.

1. Legal humiliation: the conviction of sin, terror and misery, in which a person struggles in a quandary of fear, attempting to escape divine punishment, to earn salvation or deserve redemption, but repeatedly despairing of their ability to achieve it. They came to recognise:

'That God damn them if he pleases'

' That God may show them mercy if he pleases'

There is in this an implicit antithetical manifestation of Christ - the more Christ was thought to be absent, the more he was present.

The law, with its terrors, has precedent in preaching to those who are unawakened. The law, as tutor, is prior to grace. One preaches the gospel to the fully awakened. Otherwise, being sensible to the horrors of their sins and the terrors of hell, it is only reasonable for people to weep, tremble, groan, cry out and faint. 'I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavour to fright persons away from hell.' Even Christ experienced the holy justice of God before he experienced the sweet mercy.

2. Concurrence with Divine Judgement: this culminates in the person's becoming convinced of the righteousness of God's judgement condemning them in their sin, and the conviction of their inability to do anything to effect salvation. Only by bowing in humble acceptance of God's righteous judgement are they prepared legally to hear the message of God's gracious provision.

3. Gaining a sense of calm: the person is overwhelmed with a sense of God's forgiveness, as they lay hold of the gospel by faith.

- b. 'Negative signs; or, What are no signs by which we are to judge of a work - and especially, What are no evidences that a work is not from the Spirit of God?'

(1)The occurrence of strange and extraordinary things is not a criterion by which we can judge a work to be false:'.it is not reasonable to determine that a work is not from God's Holy Spirit because of the extraordinary degree in which the minds of persons are influenced'.

(2)'A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body or the failing of bodily strength'. He says that Scripture gives us no rules on these things so that we are not in a position to judge, for such phenomena could be indication of true revival or otherwise.

(3)A great deal of noise does not invalidate the work as being of the Spirit of God.

(4)Having deep impressions on one's imagination does not invalidate the work as being of the Spirit of God.

(5)The fact that example (human actions), such as testimony, affects people does not invalidate the revival as being a work of the Spirit.

(6)That those affected should manifest certain 'great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct' does not invalidate the revival.

(7)The revival is not invalidated because there are many errors in judgement, and some of Satan's delusions are intermixed with the work.

(8)The failure of some who fall into gross error and 'scandalous practices' is not infallible proof the the work is not of the Spirit of God.

(9)'It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God that it seems to be promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness'.

c. 'What are Distinguishing Scripture evidences of a work of the Spirit of God.'

(1)When a spirit confesses that Jesus is the Son of God come in the flesh, and confesses him before men, and confesses him as Lord - as against those spirits who do not confess these things - then the work is of the Spirit of God.

(2)When the spirit that operates works against the kingdom of Satan, then it is a sure sign that it is a true and not false spirit, ie the Holy Spirit is working.

(3)When the spirit that operates does so in such a manner as to cause men to have a greater regard for the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity, then that spirit is the Spirit of God.

(4) There is a spirit of truth and a spirit of error. By certain criteria we can judge which is which, and the spirit that brings men into light is the spirit of truth, ie. the work is of the Holy Spirit.

(5) If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and men, it is a sure sign that it is the Spirit of God.

Part of the enduring legacy of Edwards is his pulling together of the authentically mystical and moral. 'Mountain top' experiences of interior ecstasy must be linked to godly obedience. Finding that some of the earlier conversions lapsed into godlessness Edwards was moved to write Religious Affections (1746) as an account of 'true religion'.

d. Religious Affections.

(1) Anthropology

Edwards' anthropology is the key to his understanding of true religion. His anthropology is set against both the rationalist focus on the mind and the enthusiasts' emphasis on emotions. Against the 'Old Lights' he sought a fully integrated anthropology. The informing of the mind must influence the heart, and to affect the heart is to arouse affections and will. He saw the faculties of mind, will and emotions as an essential unity branching out from a common trunk, the centre of personality. His theology of revival was a theology of the heart. 'out of the heart flow the issues of life.' Edwards opposed the orthodoxy which wished to treat the faculties separately - the mind filled with correct information, the will directed to good works, emotions as a sort of icing on the cake.

Only when the heart acts on the basis of the information provided through the head, only when the affections/will of the person respond to the Spirit's legal convicting work, can a person be said to be converted. Conversion (and sanctification) are centered in the affections/will of the individual. There would be no redemptive change of the faculties except the heart was first energised and transformed by the vision of God.

(2) Affections

Where this is not the case it is possible for affections to be stimulated and imitated by agencies other than the Spirit of God. Fervency, morality and testimony can all result. This is not 'true religion.'



However: 'If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart.' Affections, (a richer concept than emotions) are the spring of life. 'He that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.' Sin, is a lack of 'the sense of the heart.' 'everyone that has the power of godliness, has his inclinations and heart exercised towards God and divine things with such strength and vigour, that these holy exercises prevail in him above all carnal and natural affections, and are effectual to overcome them' 'I humbly conceive that the affections of the soul are not properly distinguished from the will as though they were two faculties in the soul. All acts of the affections of the soul are in some sense acts of the will, and acts of the will are acts of the affections. All exercises of the will are in some degree or other, exercises of the soul's appetite or aversion; or which is the same thing, of its love or hatred. Contrary to the older Puritanism, affections/will were not the lowest, most brutish, part of man, but central to true religion.

Edwards is not referring to some 'spiritual sense', but a direct casual knowledge from God. Hence a certain knowledge of God. At regeneration the Holy Spirit imposes a new revelatory idea of creation in the mind (God, sin, etc...). As this is not notional knowledge, personal behaviour necessarily changes.

### 3. Postscript To Edwards

The heirs of Edwards in the U.S. developed what became known as 'New England Theology'. Gradually however Edwards' approach and theology became less influential. American theology divided roughly into three: Reformed orthodoxy, revivalism (mysticism of emotional peak experience) and proto-liberalism (orthopraxis). None of these engaged the issues of the heart as he had. Nor did they move outside an experiential and individualistic soteriological orientation, which he shared. (For Edwards this was a necessary result of his federal Calvinism, preoccupied by the issue of assurance, and lacking a proper doctrine of perichoresis to replace a contractual understanding of the trinity.) The 'Second Great Awakening' began in 1800 on the American frontier. There the conditions seemed to suit a freer style of preaching than in Edwards' day. Methods of promoting revival were carefully studied and consciously employed. The most important influence in the respect was Charles Finney.

#### 4. C.G. Finney (1792-1875)

##### a. Introduction.

In 1821 Finney was powerfully converted. He soon began to preach evangelistically and to hold revival meetings. He systematically began to develop new techniques of 'stirring up' revivals by such 'new measures' as services at unusual hours, gatherings 'protracted' for many days, inquiry meetings and 'the anxious bench.' In the books Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1835) and Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846-47) he articulated a theology designed to get revivalistic results out of biblical, Calvinist, Methodist, Pelagian and pietistic elements. He was immensely influential in American Evangelicalism.

##### b. General Theology

Finney's personal theology is idiosyncratic, bringing together New England Theology, with its place for the will and affections, with Wesleyan post - conversion holiness emphasises and Samuel Hopkins' stress on voluntary action. Finally there was the influence of the New Haven Theology of Nathaniel William Taylor and its optimistic view of human nature.

Finney rejected the penal satisfaction theory of the atonement on the grounds that retributive justice can never be satisfied. Finney argued that Christ's death "rendered the salvation of all men *possible*" but "did not of itself lay God under any obligation to save *anybody*." Finney in essence put forth a version of the moral - government theory of the atonement. "Christ died simply to remove an insurmountable obstacle out of the way of God's forgiving sinners," thereby "inviting all men to repent, to believe in Christ, and to accept salvation." Finney argued that "instead of Christ's having satisfied *retributive* justice, and borne just what sinners deserve, he had only satisfied *public* justice, by honouring the law both in his obedience and death; and therefore rendering it safe for God to pardon sin, and to pardon the sins of any man, and of all men, who would repent and believe in Christ." This was a gospel Finney was sure would make sense to ordinary people. He could take it on the road and preach it in any town in America. He would be a evangelist from the Calvinist tradition striving to win souls in a Methodist-saturated and democracy-driven society. He rejected the Reformed doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ as a legal impossibility. God can under no condition abrogate his own moral law. Justification implies obedience to the end, repentance and sanctification of life. Concerning Luther's simul justus et peccator, 'The intellect revolts at a justification in sin.' Finney, over threw the Westminster Confession's pessimistic view of human nature, erecting in its place a republican anthropology of hope (Hambrick-Stowe). Finney advanced the basic tenet of Whig

political ideology - namely, that just rule may be with “the consent of the governed” - into the realm of theology. God, whose rule is perfectly just, will govern only with the full participation of his people. Salvation, said Finney, involves “a change in the choice of a *Supreme Ruler*.” To Finney’s way of thinking, Old School theology made salvation impossible because it autocratically denied the chance for sinners to respond, and all are sinners.

Evangelical faith is the committal of the whole will to Christ, at this point a Christian is no more than God requires him to be, he is perfect or sinless. He rejected the notion that the believer is simultaneously a saint and a sinner. Moral character consists in nothing other than moral choices. This is possible since the will is undetermined by a sinful 'nature' or by any other factor (original sin is rejected). The will is totally unconditioned and random. We are either in a position of total love or total sinfulness, for choice is ultimate. “To change your own hearts will save you; nothing else can; and on that point is suspended your eternal destiny.”

#### c. Revival Theology and Revival Methods

Revival is the 'purely philosophical result of the right use of means'. In his *Lectures on Revivals*, Charles Finney argued provocatively that just as “religion is the work of man” and “consists in obeying God,” so a revival is an essentially human activity. Contrary to the traditional Edwardsian view of them as a “surprising work of God” that could not be predicted or precipitated, Finney always believed that a revival was the “purely philosophical result of the right use of constituted means.” In other words, a preacher delivered the right gospel message, extemporaneously and with appropriate enthusiasm, and if the work was accompanied with faithful prayer, a revival could be expected. “A revival of religion is not a miracle,” it is not “something above the powers of nature” but results from “the *right exercise* of the powers of nature.”

The early Finney used 'excitement sufficient to break up the dormant moral powers' Revival preaching must be disruptive. First of all, he insisted, preaching must be targeted at the individual. “You must make a man feel that you mean *him*,” that God is provoked at “the individual’s *particular sins*.” In counselling, the pastor should “find the *point where the Spirit of God is pressing* a sinner.” Finally, when individuals could be termed “anxious sinners” who were ready to come forward, they should be “regarded as being in a very *solemn and critical state*.” Finney saw them as having “come to a turning point” at which “their destiny is likely to be settled forever.” Every sermon was to include this note of urgency: “Will you submit to God tonight - NOW?” It was critically important that this submission be made in public, overcoming the “powerful tendency to try to keep (religious feelings) private.” Finney knew that “if you can get him willing to make known his feelings, you have accomplished a great deal.... When a person is borne down with a sense his condition, if you can get him willing to have it known, if you can get him to break away from the chains of pride, you have gained an important point toward his conversion.”

Moreover, the commitment has to be made in public because conversion brings with it social responsibility, commitment to a life of public benevolence. In anti-ritualistic evangelical Protestantism, the anxious seat may be said to have provided a public

liturgy of repentance and rebirth that involved individuals together in community. The excitements of the world 'can only be counteracted by religious excitements'. Of those who wished for a revival, Finney asked, "Will you have one?" And if the answer was yes, he would push: "when shall it begin? Would you answer, Let it begin tonight - let is begin here - let it begin in my heart NOW?"

Finney came later to put more stress on the role of the Spirit in conversion, and to develop a theology of a post-conversion baptism of the Spirit. The sinner when given a sufficient amount of convincing truth changes his mind and so his heart, this is regeneration. "Not only does the preacher cry *Stop*, but through the living voice of the preacher, the Spirit cries *Stop*... The Spirit pours the exhortation home with such power, that the sinner turns." Thus, "the actual turning, or change, is the sinners own act," but "the agent who induces him, is the Spirit of God" and "a secondary agent, is the preacher," while "the truth is the instrument, or motive, which the Spirit uses to induce the sinner to turn." This was in conscious contrast to the position of Edwards.

The late Finney (1846 on), who had more experience of pastoral work, cautioned against mere emotionalism, superficiality, individualism and fanaticism. He pleaded for the centrality of Jesus Christ, the Bible and holiness.

## 5. Some questions

- a. What is the balance between divine sovereignty and human responsibility?
- b. What sort of theology leads us to try to do 'better than the world'?
- c. Which position is most open to pragmatism and compromise ('user friendly') and the manipulation of men and women?
- d. On what grounds do Christians place their assurance - grace or faith?
- e. Where should the emphasis lie, moral 'decision' or a change of heart?
- f. Is the gospel itself powerful to sustain the Christian through life or must we look for a subsequent experience eg. 'entire sanctification'?

## 340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 6 B: THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF PENTECOSTALISM

(Ultra - Summary of D.W. Dayton)

**Hypothesis: 4-fold Pentecostal gestalt – Jesus as**

1. Saviour.
2. Baptizer with Holy Spirit.
3. Healer.
4. Coming King. (quote p. 21)

1. Roots in conversionist revival tradition e.g. **Finney**.

2. Via Wesleyan doctrine of **entire sanctification**.

**18<sup>th</sup> Century Wesley** – Christocentric.

- Soteriological.
- moral (Fruit).
- **Entire Sanctification** – ‘moment’ within process.
  - crisis in process. (quote p. 47)

**John Fletcher** – 3 dispensations - Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

- Pneumatocentric, shift to Acts, “power”.
- \* **‘baptism of Holy Spirit’ ----- sanctification.**

**19<sup>th</sup> Century 1830’s Holiness Revival (US)**

**Finney** -perfectionism, moral agency.

- **entire sanctification/instant holiness** the presupposition of Christian life.

This inverts **Wesley (+ Edwards)**.

**1830's 40's Pentecostal imagery      1850's Pentecostal themes**

**Post 1858** Civil War – socio/cultural/economic change

- shift from 'ability' to 'power' (to cope).

**How to integrate holiness themes (Wesleyan) + power themes (Pentecostal)**

- (a) holiness = power; holiness – and – power.
- (b) 3 blessings – salvation/cleansing/power (1890's).
- (c) power for service (**not** sanctification) = baptism with Holy Spirit.

( **Moody, Torrey, Murray, Simpson, Gordon** )      (quote p. 103).

(c) dominant by mid 1890's.

#### **4. Healing**

Pietist tradition.

**Finney** – faith obtains its object.

**1880's** – Healing in atonement.

**Simpson, Gordon.**

- **Wesleyan model of atonement** – soul instantly cleansed.  
- body instantly healed.

Positions later modified **or** representation of perfectionist position  
(related to healing).

**1890's** – **J.A. Dowie** – less soteriological.

- emphasis on healing as power/witness.

## 5. Coming King

Shift from postmillennial optimism (**Finney**).

**Wesley** – soteriology.

**Fletcher** – Holy Spirit age correlates with return of Christ.

- prophecy --- fulfilment pattern. ‘descent’ ‘breaking in’.

**Post Civil War:** prophetic to apocalyptic expectation (ahistorical) (quote p. 158-159).

**Moody, Gordon, Simpson** – evil points to End.

\* Premillennialism the social correlate of inbreaking of Holy Spirit (quote p. 165).

Therefore by **mid 1890’s** 1, 2, 3, 4, except “tongues” as answer to the “evidence” question.

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 6 B: THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF PENTECOSTALISM

(A summary of D.W.Dayton, Theological Roots of Pentecostalism, Hendrickson, Peabody 1987)

#### Chapter 1. Toward a Theological Analysis of Pentecostalism

##### Inadequate analyses:

- a. In terms of 'glossolalia'
  - defence of criticism 'modern tongues movement' (this has been a common focus for critics and apologists of Pentecostalism.)
  - glossolalia a common religious phenomenon eg. other religions, other times, Charismatic movement
  - ∴ non-distinguishing.
  - tends to an a-historical perspective
  - 1900 Topeka, Kansas 'out of nowhere'
  - 1906 Azusa St, L.A.
  
- b. Sociological and psychological categories
  - response to 'culture shock' of urbanisation and industrialisation
  - abnormal response to material deprivation
  - emotional outlet and expression
  - this denies contemporary socio-cultural reality (prosperity)
  
- c. Theological analysis
  - focus on pneumatology ie. Spirit baptism and gifts
  - this is simplistic and reductionist.

##### Seeking a Common Pattern p.17

- look for connections to antecedent theological/ecclesiastical traditions
- a difficulty; theological variety and lack of formalised statements of belief (often borrowed) in Pentecostalism (in attempt to legitimise).



### Three Groups?

1. Wesleyan - Holiness tradition on sanctification. '3 works of grace': conversion, entire sanctification, baptism of Spirit (power)
2. 'Two works of grace' - conversion, baptism of Spirit.
3. 'Oneness' or 'Jesus Only' view.

3 = sub group of 2

Why 1 and 2?

### Two Conflicting Patterns p. 19

'Full gospel' = constellation of themes used in Pentecostalism see quote p.19 (1913)

Group 1 → 5 themes ie. '3 works of grace' (justification, sanctification, baptism of Spirit), healing, second coming.

Charles F. Parham Dec. 1900: above themes, plus 'what was the Bible evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost'

similarly Azusa St Pentecostal bodies.

Group 2. clear 'four-fold gospel' Saviour, heals, Baptised with Spirit, Coming again.  
eg. quotes p21 A.O.G.; Aimee Semple McPherson.

### The Common Four-Fold Pattern p.21

5-fold oldest, 4-fold expresses Pentecostal logic

the 4 elements appear (anticipated) elsewhere eg. A.B.Simpson (CMA) - Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer, Coming King.

4 elements coalesce and reinforce.

### The Pentecostal Hermeneutic

viz. the pattern depends on a distinctive hermeneutic

'almost exclusively on the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles'

(W J Hollenweger)

ie. narrative not didactic (Pauline) material

Tradition of a 'subjectivizing hermeneutic'

Pietism, 'higher life' - biblical Heilsgeschichte (creation, fall, redemption) is repeated in the life of the believer.

∴ if reception of Spirit separated in time from baptism of Spirit in Scripture [Luke (or John) → Acts 2] it will be also in the life of the believer.

Focus on Pentecost - leads to questions about healing, cf. Acts → Acts 3,

eg. Andrew Murray p.25.

Restorationist motifs - 'apostolic' faith. (Back to Pentecost.)

### The 'Latter Rain' Movement p. 26

Explanations of rarity of 4-fold theme in Church history (by Pentecostals):

i. Attempt to 'uncover' continuity eg. Irvingites

ii 'Latter Days' doctrine

'early rain' = Pentecost

'latter rain' = Pentecostal movement. A Gentile Pentecost: 'unites and perfects the church into the coming of the Lord' Myland (p.27)

This imparts a sense of historical destiny.

The remainder of Dayton's book is an attempt to validate his 4-fold thesis by historical research, with particular emphasis on roots in Methodism.

## Chapter 2: Methodist Roots of Pentecostalism p. 35

Suggested historical roots for Pentecostalism

1. R.C. and Anglo-Catholic doctrine of confirmation
2. Puritan teaching on the Spirit eg. 'seal of the Spirit'; combined with 'latter-day glory' eschatology
3. Pietism - 'overcoming' sin by grace

### The Methodist Connection p.38

Above are at best indirect influences and parallels.

Point of confluence, Wesley - connection with 1,2,3 above but Methodist doctrines of conversion and grace are not close to Pentecostalism.

Wesley's theology - eclectic, unsystematic, ad hoc

eg. ecclesiology - living faith, preaching, sacraments are essential to the visible church.

- 'free church', classical Protestant, Catholic emphasise one of the above 3. The Methodist attempt to find 'middle ground'. leads to instability. There is a movement back to classical Protestantism or in a radical pneumatic direction.

### The Primitive Motif p.41

Wesley - 'old religion' 'primitive Christianity'

pre 1738 - appeal to ante - Nicene Fathers (pre 325 A.D.)

1738 conversion - shift to 'soteriological primitivism'

- reformation via restoration (cf. Pietists)

but emphasis on moral fruit, not spiritual gifts.

A 'Theologian of the Spirit'? p. 42

Doctrine of assurance: 'perceptible inspiration'  
'testimony of the Spirit'

place of experience 'sufficient to confirm a doctrine which is grounded in Scripture'.

Refused to separate 'testimony of the Spirit' from 'fruit of the Spirit'.

Retains classical 'Protestant Christocentricity' - the moral ideal and the shape of salvation are grounded in Christ eg. perfection is terms of Jesus summary of the law.

Wesley and the Gifts of the Spirit p.44

Inconsistent, unsystematic.

Recognises gifts in the patristic period

Decline of gifts post-Constantine due to 'spiritual coldness'

Little interest in spiritual gifts cf. fruit of Spirit.

Question of permanency and restoration of gifts are: 'questions which it is not needful to decide.'

All Christians have received the Spirit for sanctification and salvation, a few receive extraordinary gifts.

Wesley's Doctrine of Salvation p. 45

Restoration of the image of God through stages of the operation of grace: 'preventing grace' 'convincing grace' (repentance) 'justification' 'sanctification'

Emphasis falls on sanctification: grace not primarily forensically based forgiveness but a 'healing' or 'restorative' force.(therapeutic') cf. patristics

Doctrine of 'entire sanctification' or 'Christian perfection' - example of realised eschatology and optimism of grace. Growth beyond: 'sin' properly so called, (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law)' (see quote p.47)

Teleological account of the Christian life ie. 'perfection' is a goal, usually achieved at death but can be before. (NB. difference of emphasis from later 'Wesleyan' thought).

Argued for a 'moment' of entire sanctification. (though with ambiguity).

After 1772 gave emphasis to this 'crisis' rather than the 'process' of sanctification

The Meaning of the 'Second Moment' p. 48

John Fletcher and Joseph Benson began to describe this experience as a baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Benson (1771) 'perfection' in a 'Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit'.

Wesley objected to Fletcher's use of the phrase 'receiving the Holy Ghost' as a description of this experience.

Fletcher continued to differ from Wesley (quote p.50)

A Crucial Divide p. 51

Wesley - 2 dispensations	Jewish	Christian
	works	grace

Fletcher - 3 dispensations Father, Son, Spirit

Not just Heilsgeschichte but stages of spiritual development (cf. earlier Pietists)

Wesley is soteriologically oriented (Christocentric)

Fletcher focuses more on the promise of Christ's return - this moves in a Pneumatocentric direction.

Exegetical shift to Acts; infrequent in Wesley

Also emphasis on 'power'.

**Chapter 3. The American Revival of Christian Perfection. p 63**

Methodism the largest denomination by 1840 - ministry style, Arminian and perfectionist themes adapted to era of optimism.

Early frontier preaching focussed on salvation, second blessing doctrine suited to the spiritual condition of second-generation Christians.

The Rise of the Holiness Revival p. 63

1830s 'Holiness crusade'

Phoebe Palmer - experiences sanctification

'Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness'

'Guide to Holiness' (ed)

Multiplication of home gatherings.

Reformed revivalism - Nathaniel Taylor, Edward Beecher - holiness preaching.

C.G.Finney - 'Oberlin perfectionism'

Asa Mahan - principal of Oberlin College

- call to perfection implies the ability to achieve it
- cross currents between Palmers and Oberlin
- explosion of literature
- influenced all denominations.

New Directions in Theology p. 68.

Americanisation of Methodism: revelation to reason

sinful man to natural man

free grace to free will

Wesleyan tension between crisis and process resolved by emphasis on an instantaneous 'second definite work of grace' eg. Adam Clarke's commentary on Bible - instant holiness.

Wesley's teleological emphasis is lost; entire sanctification becomes the presupposition (cf goal) of the normal Christian life.

Phoebe Palmer's 'altar theology' - 'exercise faith' and receive it immediately 'it is already yours'. (Claim entire sanctification, independently of feelings.)

Oberlin - Mahan moved in Methodist - Holiness direction

- Finney pulled back from Wesleyan formulations but salvation 'now', power of human agency, conversion the beginning of religious experience

versus Edwards/Wesley 'work of God'. God's time, conversion the result of grace.

The Emergence of Pentecostal (Acts 2) Imagery p. 71

Oberlin - Finney 1839-40, following his 'experience', but not later

- other faculty, Henry Cowles (1840), John Morgan (1845, 47) 'the baptism of the Holy Ghost....is the common privilege of all believers'. Not to be confused with conversion.

More importantly, holiness movements in the wake of 1857-58 revival

The Turn to Pentecostal Rhetoric p. 73

Restoration emphases implicit in revival

eg. William Arthur The Tongue of Fire (1856). (quote p.74)

Pentecostal imagery widely used to describe the 1857-58 revival. This revival seemed an answer to expectation of restoration and Pentecostal experiences.

Holiness movement expanded beyond Methodism

Social Forces (post 1858)

1. Civil War - slavery issue destroyed the Evangelical consensus
2. New scientific knowledge and theories - geology, Darwin.
3. Immigration - Jewish, Catholic.
4. Industrialisation, urbanisation, class difference, secularisation.

A 'Christian America' was no longer possible.

Churches (class divisions), denominations split, cults grew.

All this led to a major transformation in Wesleyan thought:

1. Optimism faded in the face of complexity of modern life and the evil of war.
2. Churches' devotion turned inward - public responsibility to private devotion, 'from Reform to Refuge'.

Before the Civil War: emphasis (Oberlin etc) on 'ability'. (In → Out)

After the Civil War: emphasis on 'power'. (Out → In)

Overt need for strength to sustain one through difficult times. These themes correlate with downward social mobility of the late nineteenth century Holiness converts.

Why did the 'Pentecostal emphasis' take so long to come?

1. Wesleyan theologians focussed on earlier Methodist vocabulary.
2. Overcoming excessive emphasis on human agency.
3. Growing 'spiritual ' emphasis in late nineteenth century eg. Christian Science, theosophy, spiritualism, philosophical idealism; in orthodox circles this meant a focus on the Holy Spirit. quote p.79 Scofield.
4. Apologetic reasons - perfectionism (Wesley, Oberlin) was always open to criticism. Pentecostal vocabulary was *prima facie* more biblical.

#### **Chapter 4. The Triumph of the Doctrine of Pentecostal Spirit Baptism p. 89**

Self conscious expressions of the doctrine of Pentecostal sanctification:

##### 1. Methodism

Phoebe Palmer eg 1859 The Promise of the Father  
'last days', 'prophecy' (preaching), Acts 2, 'power' etc

##### 2. Reformed

Asa Mahan (1870) The Baptism of the Holy Ghost (Reshaped doctrine of entire sanctification).

- i. quickened 'natural power'
- ii 'moral and spiritual power'
- iii 'appreciation of truth'
- iv 'assurance of hope
- v 'fellowship with the Father and...Jesus...'
- vi 'permanent spiritual blessedness'



Shift to Pentecostal Sanctification p. 90

National Camp Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness. (1869 on) Sermon themes:

- Acts 1:8, 'empowerment', 'A Modern Pentecost' the baptism of the Holy Ghost is a positive, specific, conscious instantaneous experience'

Holiness movement away from its more conservative and Methodist roots,

1890s - great focus on Pentecostal themes, 'Ideal Pentecostal Church', 'Pentecostal Life', 'Pentecostal Womanhood', 'Pentecostal Pulpit', 'Pentecostal Testimonies', 'Pentecostal Closet'.

Fletcher Redivivus p. 92

Emphasis on Pentecost revived Fletcher's doctrine of dispensations.

By the 1890s there was much talk on 'the dispensation of the Holy Ghost'.

Various pneumatological themes:

Mahan - spiritual gifts and prophecy (new dispensation)

Phoebe Palmer - prophecy

Interest turned to 'supernatural' gifts of healing and miracles.

'Power or 'Holiness'? p. 93

How to integrate Wesleyan tradition of 'perfection' and 'cleansing' (moral effects) with 'power' motif in Pentecost texts? 3 Answers:

(1) Phoebe Palmer: holiness is power'

A M Hills: 'Holiness and Power for the Church and the Ministry'

- negative and positive aspects of the same 'work'.

(2) The 'Three Blessings' Teaching p. 95 (conversion, sanctification, power)

An empirical problem - many who claimed to be 'entirely sanctified'; lacked 'spiritual power'.

A B Earle - first a clean heart, then baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Asa Mahan - emptying and filling = purity and power.

A Lowry - Christ 'holy.. undefiled.. yet he sought and received the baptism of the Spirit.' etc.

P Jacobs - if power brings purity no one before Pentecost had a pure heart.

Mainstream Holiness - disciples not sanctified before Pentecost.

'Three Blessings' Teaching - disciples entirely sanctified before Pentecost. (For example, the forty days prior to Pentecost were a 'holiness revival')

-some advocates of this position: 'demonstrations of the Spirit' eg. shouting, dancing in the Spirit, laughter.

(3) The Revivalist Doctrine of the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit' p. 100

Revivalists of Reformed tradition: 'empowering for service'.

Finney - 'endowment of power from on high' to fulfil the Great Commission.

Moody's 1871 experience 'power for service'

"Secret Power' (1881) - distinct from conversion and assurance.

R A Torrey: 'The Baptism with the Holy Spirit' (1895,'97).

4 points cited p.103

J. Wilbur Chapman: 'Received Ye the Holy Ghost?' (1894)

- all believers 'baptised in Spirit' need for a later 'infilling'

The Keswick Movement p. 104

Anglican Evangelical (UK) parallel to Holiness Movement in U.S.

Shied away from perfectionism, emphasised 'suppression' of sin.

More Christocentric doctrine of the 'Spirit-filled life'

Influence of Keswick Conventions in U.S.

via Moody - F B Meyer, Andrew Murray, H.W. Webb-Peploe, G Campbell Morgan.

American Keswick figures - A.B. Simpson, A.J. Gordon (Gordon - Conwell Seminary)

The Last Harbingers: Simpson and Gordon p. 106 (before 4-fold Pentecostal gestalt)

A J Gordon - Oberlin influence (1894-95)

- second stage gift of the Spirit, qualifies us for most effective service
- more emphasis on sanctification than Moody/Torrey

AB Simpson- 'The Holy Spirit or Power from on Higher' (1895-96)

- foolish virgins/wise virgins = 2 types of Christians before/after Pentecost.

'by the mid-1890s almost every branch of the Holiness and "higher life" movements of the nineteenth century, as well as the revivalism of the period on general, was teaching a variation of some sort or another on the baptism of the Holy Spirit...' (p.108)

cf. 6 vols of 'Pentecost Hymns' 1890-1910

## **Chapter 5 The Rise of the Divine Healing Movement p. 115**

Luther, Calvin, Owen, Warfield - healing restricted to apostolic age.

### Wesley and Divine Healing p. 117

- Wesley -ambiguous, influence from higher Anglicanism, Puritanism, Quakers, Pietism
- Journals record events which would seem to be miraculous healings
  - refused to claim any healing gifts, but didn't deny God 'hears and answers prayer even beyond the ordinary course of nature.'

### The Influence of Pietism p. 119

Healing through prayer and faith.

Bengel on Mark 16:16-17, James 5:14-15.

Johann Christopher Blumhardt - 'Jesus is Victor'

- relationship between sin and sickness, so forgiveness should lead to improved health.
- establishment of communities for spiritual and physical help.

### Development in England and America p. 121

George Muller - emphasis on faith and prayer alone as the grounds for God's provision.

- Finney - 'prevailing' or 'effectual prayer'
- 'pray for a definite object' 'pray in faith'
  - 'expect to obtain the blessing'
  - 'faith always obtains the object'

'Healing by Faith' p. 122

Charles Cullis 1862 on

'Faith Training College'

'Faith Cures' (1879), conventions, publishing house, homes for sick etc.

W E Boardman (Presbyterian) 'The Lord That Healeth Thee' (1881) healing through faith is 'itself part and parcel of the Gospel'

R L Stanton - Isaiah 53: 3-5; Matthew 8: 16-17 'when the primitive faith and practice of the Church shall be restored...the "healing of the sick" and "preaching the Kingdom of God" on the same plane...'

'Healing in the Atonement' p. 127

A B Simpson-(1881) convinced of 'divine healing' - became second to Charles Cullis as leader of Faith Cure movement.

- concerned to 'accentuate the positive'.

'If sickness be the result of the Fall' it must be included in the atonement of Christ which reaches as "far as the curse is found" '

'other methods (of healing) must be man's ways' (lack of faith).

A J Gordon (1882) 'The Ministry of Healing'

'two streams of blessings...healing...regeneration'

R Kelso Carter (1879, healed of heart condition through Cullis) - appeal to Wesleyan model of instantaneous sanctification. 'the atonement has provided for the body all that it has provided for the soul'

Second Thoughts, p. 130

Carter (1897) - rejected his earlier views of mechanical application of Atonement and abandonment of 'means'

- arose out of failure of faith and success of medicine in his own life.
- full effect of Atonement postponed, healing a 'special favour'

This review was confirmed by others.

### Disagreements in the Holiness Associations p. 133

More classical and conservative Methodist leadership tried to maintain the above position.

As Holiness movement spread healing services multiplied at camp meetings.

By 1900 an emphasis on divine healing was a common feature of the Holiness movement. Incorporated in official and semi-official statements of faith. eg quote p. 135

Healing doctrine was a radicalisation of holiness teaching in its perfectionist direction.

John Alexander Dowie (1890-91)

'you can't get healing without salvation, and you can't get entire sanctification without salvation and healing'

In Dowie 'the themes of healing were being extracted from their soteriological rooting in redemption and being restated in a more distinctly Pentecostal vein. Healing becomes more a magnification of Pentecostal "power" and an evidence of "God also bearing witness by signs and wonders...by manifold powers by gifts of the Holy Spirit."

### **Chapter 6 The Rise and Fall of Premillennialism p. 143**

Correlation between intense experiences of Spirit and longing for imminent return of Christ. Holy Spirit and eschatology are linked in Acts 2 and Paul. Fascination with prophetic and apocalyptic. (Montanism, Joachim of Fiore, Irvingites)

Dispensational premillennialism - J N Darby, Plymouth Brethren, prophecy conferences, Bible institutes etc. Pentecostal hermeneutic is not close to dispensationalism. A parallel development.

### Puritan and Pietist Influences p. 147

Puritanism-'latter day glory' of the Church, collapse of the papacy, conversion of the Jews, success of missions

-tended to postmillennialism

Pietism -hope for 'better times' ahead for the church

#### Wesley and Fletcher: Pulling in Different Directions p. 149

Wesley - cautious, uncommitted, soteriological focus.

'I have only one thing to do, - to save my soul, and those who hear me.' A sort of 'realised eschatology'

Fletcher - each dispensation has its correlated promise  
- dispensation of Spirit, imminent return of Christ.

(Tendencies to read the Old Testament as anticipation of Pentecost ie. prophecy /fulfilment pattern of reading Bible

Acts 1&2 'tarry and wait', 'descent', 'breaking in' cf. eschatology. Contrasts with the gradualism of (post-millennialism), discontinuity is emphasised.

Wesley's views of perfectionism were compatible with an optimistic social vision, as in post-millennialism.

#### Millennialist Currents in Revivalism p. 153

Jonathan Edwards: revivals under his ministry a beginning of the latter day of glory?

closer to Wesley than Pentecostalism

eg. attitude to extraordinary gifts quote p.154. Postmillennial.

Later synthesis of American revivalism (post Edwards) and Methodist perfectionism/optimism.

eg. Oberlin - inauguration of millennium contingent on human effort but Finney's writings are so soteriological that millennium isn't formalised.

Holiness movement, advances in arts and sciences, dominance of Christian nations as signs that 'the millennium is at hand' If the Church would fully obey the millennium would come quickly.

This is the opposite to premillennialism in Pentecostalism.

#### Prophetic versus Apocalyptic p. 158

Failure of optimistic postmillennialism led to despair, hope sustained by re-arranged chronology ie. pre millennialism. Substitution of 'apocalyptic' (pessimism, cosmic inbreaking, ahistorical) for prophetic (plain history, politics, human agents) eschatology. This sustains the vision.

#### A Changing Vision p. 160

Social change.-Civil War, immigration, urbanisation, industrialism.

Learning - new science, biblical criticism.

1878 - prophetic conferences in N.Y. advocating premillennialism.

Moody - pre-millennial, evil in world.

'Evil of the age', 'signs of the times' - the End signalled by decline, not progress.

Evangelism -not transformation of society but selecting out 'the elect'

A.B. Simpson, A.J. Gordon, for example, were strong advocates of premillennialism.

#### Premillennialism in the Holiness Movement p. 164

National Holiness Association - Methodist roots,,,, resisted premillennialism.

Postmillennialism - social correlate of doctrine of entire sanctification (Purofocation of society); role of human agency and vanquishment of evil in history.

Premillennialism - social correlate of doctrine of baptism of Holy Spirit; instantaneous transformation, divine agency, human role to 'tarry and wait' for the 'blessed hope'

By mid 1890s major leaders of Methodistic Holiness became advocates of the new doctrine.

'Nearly every wing of late nineteenth-century revivalism was teaching in one form or another all the basic themes of Pentecostalism except for the experience of glossolalia, or "speaking in tongues" ' p.167.

Epilogue: The Emergence of Pentecostalism p. 173

Pentecostal gestalt: 1. Christ as Saviour 2. Baptiser with Holy Spirit 3. Healer.  
4. Coming King.

1. Roots in conversionist revivalist tradition. (Saviour)
2. Via Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification (Baptiser)
3. Radicalisation of doctrine of instant sanctification of consequences of sin (disease) which are dealt with in Atonement. (Healer)
4. Transformation of Holiness post millennialism. (King)

Camp Meeting c.1900 - 4 themes are basic organising principle eg. pp.174-175.

'The Lord is my Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King'

Emergence of Pentecostalism - recognition by some Holiness leaders that the only difference was tongues.

Tongues as evidence of a significant shift in the tradition of baptism of Holy Spirit.

Question of 'evidence' had been raised before eg. Puritanism and assurance, Wesley's emphasis on moral fruit.

Controversy in 1890s about 'outward signs' as evidence of salvation.

'Once the question was put, the account of Pentecost in Acts, especially as read through certain Pauline texts in 1 Corinthians 12-14, provided a ready made answer: the "evidence of speaking in unknown tongues" '

Outbreaks of glossolalia with increasing frequency from 1870.

Some met with opposition.

Incidents were widespread and unrelated.



Much better understand the context: 'In December of 1900...' (p.179)

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 7 A: CLASSICAL PENTECOSTALISM

#### 1. Introduction

'Classical Pentecostalism' refers to a movement which began early in the twentieth century and which has as its central doctrine the baptism of the Holy Spirit. More accurately it is the experience of the Holy Spirit which is fundamental to Pentecostalism. (Pentecostalism is not primarily a doctrine, method or strategy, but an experience - a personal experience of the inner working of the Holy Spirit: Edward D. O'Connor.) As a conscious 'third force' in ecclesiology (cf. R.C., Protestant) Pentecostalism asserts itself as a restoration movement, recalling and returning the Church back to the vitality of apostolic experience characterised by Pentecost itself. For example, Article 3 (c) of the 'Articles of Faith' of the Assemblies of God reads:

"To seek by the grace of God the full restoration of New Testament Christianity as exhibited in the Scriptures of the New Testament; in the holiness of life, power and sincerity of faith of the believers; in the order of government and discipline obtaining in: "the Assembly which is his body"; and also in that manifestation of power and confirmation of the preached Word of God with signs and wonders following, as characterised the New Testament Church, based on the following, as characterised the New Testament Church, based on the immutability of God's Holy Word, and the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ our Lord.'

It should be noted that in general theological terms Pentecostalism does not seek to add to traditional theology - on subjects such as the Trinity, incarnation, atonement and the authority of the Bible nothing is new. 'They (Pentecostals) see Christianity conventionally in terms of the three Rs - Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration.' (J I Packer). In soteriology the approach is that of Arminian evangelicalism. In terms of historical theology therefore it seems necessary to focus on the distinctives of the movement - the baptism of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and divine healing. Since however it is claimed, contrary to traditional theology, that these doctrines can be established by Scripture it is necessary to consider the question of Pentecostal hermeneutics.

#### 2. Theological Method.

Other approaches to methodology can be summarised as follows. Roman Catholics: Scripture and tradition flow as two streams from a single source in God. Reformation: *sola scriptura*, that which cannot be established by the plain sense of Holy Scripture (grammatical-historical) cannot be maintained. Anglican (Hooker): Scripture, tradition and reason form a hierarchy of authority which harmonises by means of the divine law from which they are derived. Liberal: Scripture must be approached against the background of modern knowledge and especially the self-understanding of human beings: 'Accommodation'.

Pentecostalism does not conform to any of these patterns as it is an attempt to reflect on the teaching of Scripture subsequent to a (personal) historical experience (viz. 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'). As such it emphasises a pneumatic approach to the Bible. The Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture and who inhabits the believer is a bridge creating a spiritual kinship between the two. Knowledge of the meaning of Scripture is not primarily assentual (RC) or propositional (Fundamentalism) but a relational communion with the author of Scripture himself. This involves an experiential or 'subjectivising' hermeneutic. The Bible is not approached as an objective source of doctrine or morality but as an agent of the Spirit which will lead the Christian into an existential continuity with its own witness to the Spirit-filled life of the first believers. A paradigm is found in a dialogical relationship between experience and Scripture. 'At every point, experience informs the process of interpretation and the fruit of interpretation informs experience' (Arrington).

A distinctive of Pentecostal theology is the importance it places on historical narrative in the New Testament, in particular the writings of Luke-Acts. These provide the (purported) evidence for the primary Pentecostal doctrines of subsequence and initial evidence. Evidence for a post-conversion baptism of the Holy Spirit with tongues is found in different ways in Acts 2,8,9,10 and 19. This assumes that it was Luke's theological intention to record a narrative pattern concerning Christian experience of the Holy Spirit. In practice it places Acts on a par with both the Gospels (Liberalism) and the Pauline Epistles (Evangelicalism) as sources for Christians today. It is illegitimate to separate the didactic from the historical in Scripture. cf. 1 Cor. 10:11 'happened to them (Israel) as an example, and they were written for our instruction'. cf. Rom. 15:4. In the N.T. there can be found no rigid distinction in principle between historiography and teaching that some Evangelicals have used to reject the didactic context of Acts. Luke expresses his theology by means of the selection and arrangement of events as we find them in Acts.

### 3. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

'We believe that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the bestowing of the believer with power to be an effective witness for Christ. This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the New Birth; is received by faith, and is accompanied by the manifestation of speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, as the initial evidence. Luke 24-29; Acts 1:4,5,8; Acts 2:1-14; 8: 15-19; 11: 14-17; 19: 1-7.' (A.O.G. 'Articles of Faith', 13)

The following elements seem integral to the Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit:

- (1) The experience is a baptism in or with the Spirit, whereby a person is supernaturally immersed in or submerged by the power of the Holy Spirit. This points to totality of the presence of the third Person of the Trinity.

(2) This event is distinct from and subsequent to regeneration. Sometimes the distinction is chronological, always it is logical ie. conversion precedes Spirit baptism.

(3) The initial evidence of having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. Appeal is made to the 5 passages in Acts which refer to the coming of the Spirit. Pentecostals see in glossolalia an extraordinary sign of an extraordinary event - the gift of the Holy Spirit. By this a supernatural happening finds supernatural expression. The dynamic experience of the presence of God in the Holy Spirit overflows in self-transcending praise glorifying God.

(4) The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Primarily this power is power for witness (Acts 4:31; 9:15). It also enables the performance of mighty works (John 14:12; Acts 2: 43; 5:15; 19:12). It is a commissioning of the believer for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

(5) The basic requirement for the reception of the Holy Spirit is faith. (Acts 8:12; 9:10; 10:4; 11:17; 19:4; Gal. 3:2 etc). On the basis of a possible temporal separation of faith (for salvation) and Spirit-baptism the Pentecostal tradition has often spoken of certain conditions. These may include prayer, repentance, obedience, yielding-surrender-consecration. These conditions are not considered as requirements in addition to faith but as expression of faith in Christ the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit.

#### 4. Spiritual Gifts.

'We believe that the Holy Spirit has the following gifts to bestow upon the believing church of the Lord Jesus Christ: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation; that, according to the degree of grace and faith possessed by the recipient, these gifts are divided to every man severally, as He, the Holy Spirit will; that they are to be earnestly desired and coveted, in order and proportion wherein they prove most edifying and beneficial to the Church....' ('The Foursquare Declaration of Faith')

Theologically, the important question here relates not only to the nature of the gifts, which is primarily an exegetical question, but their status and importance. Pentecostals strongly deny the classic Reformed or dispensationalist view that the *Charismata* died out with the Apostles or the completion of the N.T. canon. It is argued that this has no basis in Scripture. Usually the absence of these gifts in the past life of the Church is ascribed to a failure to desire, pray and expect God's working in these ways. In particular this is attributed to institutionalisation or tradition. There is a tendency to focus on the gifts in 1 Cor. 12 and to emphasise the difference between the natural and the supernatural.

## 5. Divine Healing.

'In accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures, we trust our Heavenly Father to protect and heal our bodies from sickness and disease. WE BELIEVE that divine healing for the body, as with all redemptive blessings of God, has been provided for us by the atoning death and victorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; it is the privilege of all believers and it is appropriated by faith in our Heavenly Father's unfulfilling promises. Exod. 15:26; Isa. 53:4; Matt. 8: 16,17; Psa. 103:3; James 5:14, 15; Mark 16:17, 18.' (A.O. G. 'Articles of Faith', 15)

'We believe that Divine Healing is the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to heal the sick and the afflicted in answer to believing prayer; that He who is the same yesterday, and today and forever has never changed but is still an all sufficient help in the time of trouble, able to meet the needs of, and quicken into newness of life, the body as well as the soul and spirit, in answer to the faith of them who ever pray with submission to His divine and sovereign will.' ('Foursquare Declaration of Faith', 14) 'Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53: 4-5; Matthew 8: 16-17)' ('Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada').

The Pentecostal distinctives with respect to healing appear to be:

- (1) That healing is available today in the same manner as it was during the time of Jesus and the Apostles.
- (2) That it is the constant will of God to heal believers.
- (3) That provision for healing was made in the atonement in such a way that these benefits are available to the trusting and obedient Christian in the present time as part of their salvation.
- (4) That the only essential reason why all are not healed is a lack of faith directed to Christ and his promises.

## 6. Comments.

### (a) Positively .

- (1) Returned the third person of the Trinity to a place of proper focus in theological discussion.
- (2) Reminded the Church of the supernatural dimensions of the Christian faith.
- (3) Released the laity into an all-member spiritual ministry.
- (4) Recalled all believers to an intimate existential relationship with the living God.

### (b) Negatively.

- (1) Tendency to be a-historical or anti-historical in relation to traditional Christianity.  
This is sometimes expressed in anti-intellectualism.
  - (2) Tends to read the Scriptures in the light of experience, ie. subjectively or pragmatically.
  - (3) Tends to a uniform hermeneutic, especially in the use of Acts. However:
    - i The Word of God relates to what the author intended to teach, not to incidental details.
    - ii Only if the purpose of a given narrative is to establish precedent can the precedent be regarded as normative. (Description is not prescription).
    - iii The normal should not be confused with the normative eg. the mode of baptism, immersion may not be necessary.
    - iv Analogy is not theological precedent unless this is clearly taught in Scripture eg. Jesus 'baptism in the Spirit' Cf. tongues speaking is valid today because of the teaching of 1 Cor. 12-14, not because of the contemporary practice of glossalalia.
- (Fee, How to Read the Bible, pp 87 ff).
- (4) Tends to inadequate theological analysis eg. why should the baptism of the Holy Spirit be subsequent to conversion? Why is it that tongues, rather than prophecy, is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit?
  - (5) Tends to emphasise discontinuity rather than continuity eg. point to (1) above, sanctification through crisis
  - (6) Tends to emphasise faith rather than grace eg. in salvation (Arminian), reception of the Spirit/gifts, healing.
  - (7) Most of the above can be understood in terms of a pneumatic - subjective centre rather than a Christ - centred approach.

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 7 B: CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY

#### 1. Introduction.

The term 'Charismatic' is used interchangeably with 'Neo-Pentecostal' and refers to those who have had a similar experience to classical Pentecostals but have chosen to remain in their respective denominations. This provides quite a different theological context historically to that of Pentecostalism. Whereas Pentecostal restorationism tended to consider the New Testament Church its immediate historical antecedent, defining itself over against traditional Christianity and becoming exclusivist, Charismatics were immediately conscious of their historical situation in relation to their denominational and theological forebears eg. Lutheran, evangelical. This means that whereas the framework of Pentecostal theology was constructed around or generated out of the experience of the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' Charismatic theologies sought to interpret their experience, broadly speaking, within their pre-existing theological patterns. This has led to greater diversity in doctrine and practice with respect to the cardinal experiences of the Holy Spirit than that found in classical Pentecostalism.

#### 2. Theological Method.

There is no single theological method or hermeneutic in the Charismatic Renewal. Some Charismatics have taken over the Pentecostal approach to Scripture unaltered. Roman Catholic charismatics have tended to look to strands of traditional pneumatology to provide a key to interpret what the Holy Spirit is doing today. For example Thomas Aquinas said: 'There is an invisible sending also with respect to an advance in virtue or an increase of grace... Such an invisible sending is especially to be seen in that kind of increase of grace whereby a person is moved forward into some new act or some new state of grace: as, for instance, when a person is moved forward into the grace of working miracles, or of prophecy, or out of the burning love of God offers his life as a martyr, or renounces all his possessions, or undertakes some other such arduous thing' (*Summa Theologiae* I, q42, a.6, ad 2um). By this hermeneutic theological continuity is maintained.

Charismatics whose spiritual self-identity incorporates the Reformation have been most inclined to challenge the Pentecostal hermeneutic without denying the distinctive experience to which it is attached.. Scripture, especially Luke-Acts, is read in a less existential or subjectivising manner with greater focus being placed on the historical context in which the various operations of the Holy Spirit are recorded. The meaning of the baptismal experience of Jesus cannot be disassociated from his unique Messianic identity, the day of Pentecost is unrepeatable, the Samaritans, the Gentile household of Cornelius and the Ephesian disciples (of John the Baptist) represent stages in the initial expanse of the Gospel. This is more of a hermeneutic of transition or process rather than of crisis. Finally, there is a tendency in some circles towards a functional hermeneutic, motivated by a desire for cooperation. 'The turn we need to make, I am

convinced, is towards an action of the Holy Spirit which fits no category, but one that does make much of our traditional theology operational.' (J Rodman Williams).



### 3. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

#### (a) Consequence

Again there are broad divisions. Some adopt the Pentecostal doctrine in totality. Roman Catholics either interpret the baptism of the Spirit in the sense following Aquinas (above) or within a sacramental framework theologically, or objectively, sacramental baptism imparts the baptism in the Spirit and all of the spiritual gifts, experientially there may be a release of these into consciousness later in the life of the believer through receiving faith. This maintains the chronology of the Pentecostal doctrine (via baptismal regeneration) and its significance, but without radical departure from traditional RC soteriology.

A similar approach is taken by some Protestant theologians. Resistance is often shown here to the use of 'baptism in the Spirit' apart from regeneration. The preferred language here is 'to be filled with the Spirit'. 'Fillings' may happen repeatedly in terms of a 'release' of what the believer actually received objectively at conversion but has hitherto not experienced. The model is one of spiritual renewal rather than an actual stage in the order of salvation. Christians are urged to appropriate what is already theirs in Christ. The Pentecostal doctrine of consequence is resisted on Christological grounds, to receive Christ viz. conversion, is to receive - at least implicitly or proleptically - all that belongs to Christ in his fullness. This eliminates the possibility of two basic categories of Christian however they may be defined eg. 'carnal' - 'spiritual', uncommitted - totally committed, - non-Spirit filled, - Spirit-filled. It is pointed out that the N.T. never uses the expression 'baptism in the Spirit' (noun-state) but 'baptise with the Spirit' (verbal-dynamic). To be Spirit-filled is, especially in Lukan theology, to be empowered, to be enabled to speak God's word (prophecy, evangelism) with boldness (Luke 1:41f, 67f.; Acts 4:8,31; 6:5,10; 9:17; 22:15).

It is sometimes argued (JGD Dunn) that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is part of a conversion - initiation complex referred to repeatedly in Acts. This contains various elements - baptism in water, repentance, faith, forgiveness and so on. It is participation in the complex which is necessary for the start of the Christian life, Luke does not present any essential sequence within the complex, eg. Acts 10 cf. Acts 19. If a theological reason is sought for the experience of consequence in the Christian life one need look no further than a failure to preach/receive the Gospel in the manner of the apostolic community cf. Gal. 3:3-5. The assumption here is that the N.T. expects all believers to be baptised or filled with the Spirit at conversion.

#### (b) Evidence.

Whereas some Charismatics adopt the position of classical Pentecostalism that glossolalia is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit, many depart from this emphasis. For Charismatics tongues speaking is not so much a badge of identity nor a witness of spiritual authenticity as an aid to personal edification. To adopt the Pentecostal position on tongues seems to many Charismatics a betrayal of the vitality of their spiritual ancestry. Other gifts, or spiritual experiences, such as joy and power to witness, are looked upon as clear evidence of the reception of the Spirit.

(c) Conditions.

Outwardly, there seems to be little difference to Pentecostalism at this point - one needs to ask, repent, persist and so on. Theologically however the framework is of a grace to be experienced (realisation) rather than a gift to be received (appropriation).

#### 4. The Gifts of the Spirit.

Since for many Charismatics the ability to speak in tongues is not the evidence of Spirit-filled baptism, tongues speaking does not occupy the central place it does in Pentecostalism. Most Charismatics follow the classical Pentecostal interpretation of the nine gifts in 1 Corinthians. There are some differences however in understanding 'wisdom', 'knowledge' and 'discernment of spirits'. If anything, there is a tendency to incorporate the gifts into a wider canvas of God's working, eg. lists other than 1 Cor. are considered, the lists are not exhaustive, the supernatural is not equated with the spectacular.

In terms of the 5-fold ministry gifts in Ephesians 4, opinions differ. The ecclesiology of more traditional denominations, especially those with episcopacy, tends to militate against an active theology of the 5-fold ministry.

#### 5. Divine Healing.

Again, some take up the traditional Pentecostal position without criticism. For perhaps the majority of charismatics physical healing is given less emphasis. Alternately, there is a more fully developed understanding of inner-healing. The common ground for all Christian approaches to all forms of healing and deliverance is the atonement. Charismatics however are more likely to emphasise that the highest good of the believer is to be conformed to the image of God, this may necessitate physical suffering within the permissive will of God.

Charismatics with an evangelical heritage tend to view a Pentecostal theology of healing as an example of an 'over-realised eschatology'. Today we live in the 'time between the times', a mixed state of struggle and sin and sickness only to be fully overcome at the Parousia. Faith is sometimes a condition for healing but no amount of faith can alter our eschatological situation. We may ask God to heal with confidence, but our confidence must be conditioned by his wisdom. (See appendix)

## 6. Comments

### (a) In relation to Pentecostalism.

- i Greater emphasis on continuity - more historical, holistic.
- ii Greater awareness of the (traditional) theological distinction between the objective (given) and the subjective (experienced).

### (b) Positively

- i Recapturing of the proper role of the Holy Spirit
- ii Awareness of the supernatural dimension of the Christian life.
- iii A strong existential emphasis - in contrast to dead orthodoxy. eg. music.
- iv A recapturing of body-life, eg. intentional communities.

### (c) Negatively

- i Tolerance of inconsistencies eg. devotion to Mary, clerical priesthood.
- ii Tendency to be Church-centred rather than Kingdom-centred. (Inward)

**EXTRA NOTE: Cross and Spirit.**

(T. Smail (1995), Charismatic renewal, London: S.P.C.K.)

1. ‘The way to Pentecost is Calvary; the Spirit comes from the cross’
2. Pentecostal renewal: 2 Stages

Jesus life and death	Pentecostal empowerment
Old world	New supernatural world
Suffering and struggle	Triumph
Pardon	Power

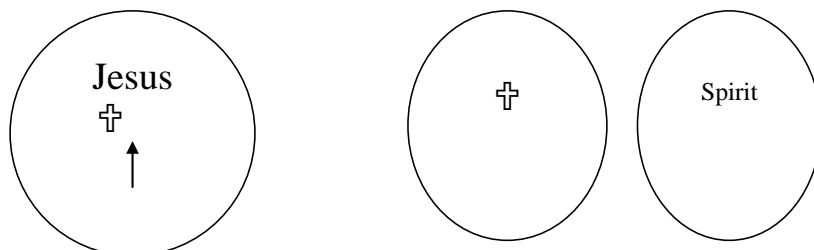
Theologia crucis

Theologia gloriae

John / Paul

Luke

e.g. John 1:29-33; 16:7;  
20:19-23; 1 Cor 1:22-25;  
v2:2-5; Phil 3:10.



3. The power of love, not the love of power.
4. ‘The sesame key to wholeness is not speaking in tongues, or the healing of the memories, thanking God for everything or asking him for anything; it is not having your demons cast out, still less being ‘slain’ in the Spirit or reliving your traumatic birth experience, or any other of the fashions that have followed one another in quite fast succession over the past twenty five years. All these can at best offer subsidiary assistance to some people in some situations, but the ultimate key to the wholeness that God purposes for his people and his world is far more central to the gospel than any of these; it is Calvary love.’
5. Victory is in bearing evil, not escaping it. ‘His suffering is the very stuff out of which he fashions his glory.’

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 8 A: THIRD WAVE THEOLOGY

#### 1. Introduction

Peter Wagner, who with John Wimber ranked as the foremost proponent of 'third wave' theology provides a useful summary of its essentials.

'The term "third wave" is used to designate a movement that is similar to the Pentecostal movement (first wave) and charismatic movement (second wave), but which perceives itself to have some fairly important differences. It is composed largely of evangelical Christians who, while applauding and supporting the work of the Holy Spirit in the first two waves, have chosen not to be identified with either. The desire of those in the third wave is to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in healing the sick, casting out demons, receiving prophecies, and participating in other charismatic-type manifestations without disturbing the current philosophy of ministry governing their congregations.'

Wagner names 5 distinctives; these should be taken together;

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion (1 Cor. 12:13).
2. Expectation of multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit.
3. Tongues is not the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit but one of the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit distributes among believers.
4. Ministry under the power and anointing of the Spirit, rather than a spiritual experience, as the point of entry into the third wave.
5. Avoidance of divisiveness.

(CP Wagner (1988), 'Third Wave' in Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, Zondervan.

In practice it is point 4 which has become the distinctive of the movement.

#### 2. The Kingdom of God.

Wimber popularised the theology of G. E. Ladd concerning the Kingdom of God. Ladd in turn reflected a broad consensus going back to Cullmann and others. According to this framework the kingdom is not so much realm as rule, the exercise of kingly reign in the world. The coming of Jesus was the arrival of the King upon the earth to establish his Kingdom. This had been prophesied in the O.T. and by John the Baptist. Finding the presence of a rival kingdom, that of Satan, 'the prince of this world' ruling through sin, sickness and death, Jesus set about to destroy the power of the devil. Jesus announced the imminent coming of the kingdom and authenticated his message with

works of power: 'signs and wonders'. He cast out demons, healed the sick, made nature obey him, raised the dead and forgave sin. This demonstrated conclusively that Satan's power had been broken and that, therefore, the kingdom had come. He instructed and expected his disciples to preach the Kingdom and perform signs and wonders in the same way as he did.

Jesus accomplished the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth by defeating Satan and his kingdom and breaking the power of sin and death through his substitutionary death and unparalleled resurrection. He will visibly return to complete the work he began and to draw this age of evil and conflict to a close. Christians live in a time where the 'age to come' overlaps with the 'present evil age'. Now we may know something of the blessings of the future. The manifestation of the Kingdom consists essentially in the manifestation of power. 'Casting out demons, raising people from the dead, healing the sick, providing food where there is none, stilling the elements, these are Signs of the Kingdom'.

### 3. Worldview and Spiritual Power.

Wimber was deeply influenced by Professor Charles Kraft concerning the influence of worldview on Christian evangelism. Kraft defined worldview in terms of cultural perception: 'Cultures pattern perceptions of reality into conceptualisations of what reality can or should be; what is regarded as actual, probable, possible, or impossible. These conceptualisations form what is termed the "worldview" of our culture.' The Western worldview is materialistic, secular, rationalistic and mechanistic. This worldview, which has deeply affected the thinking of Western Christians, is in conflict with a biblical worldview which emphasises a belief in the supernatural - God, spirits, Satan, miracles, revelation. According to Wimber the Western worldview, unlike that of Eastern or native cultures, has produced scepticism concerning the supernatural and a relegation of divine acts of power into the past, ie. biblical times.

This leads to what Professor Paul Hiebert calls the 'excluded middle'.

Biblical Worldview	Western Worldview
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God	God
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Spirit Sphere	Human Sphere
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Human Sphere	
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We need to recover the middle tier lost during the Enlightenment. To 'rediscover, develop and practice a theology which includes....God in human history, now, in the affairs of nations, or peoples and individuals; a theology of divine guidance, provisions, Signs and Wonders, healings, invisible powers,' and so on.

Since we 'see' and experience things in terms of our worldview what is required is a paradigm shift ie. a basic change of perspective. This could involve a change of will, for example, openness to new experience - watching God heal, re-reading the Gospels, coming to seminars, praying for people personally.

#### 4. Power Evangelism.

This is set in contrast with the less effective method of programmatic evangelism. Power evangelism is '...a presentation of the Gospel that is rational but which transcends the rational. The explanation of the Kingdom of God comes with a demonstration of God's power. It is a spontaneous, Spirit- inspired presentation of the Gospel. It is usually preceded and undergirded by demonstrations of God's presence and frequently results in groups of people being saved.'

As in the book of Acts, Christians today should expect God to attend their outreach by 'divine appointments', words of knowledge,, healing and so forth. In power evangelism resistance to the gospel is supernaturally overcome and results in a deep conversion that is more likely to result in ongoing discipleship. When demonic powers resist the coming of the kingdom of God a 'power encounter' ensues. Christians are equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit and his gifts to overcome the power of Satan in such circumstances.

#### 5. Power Healing.

Healing is important because it is a sign of the power of the Kingdom of God. Christians should expect to see miraculous healings today as the compassion and mercy of Jesus is undiminished. Healing is extended to the whole person - overcoming the spiritual sickness caused by sin, healing the effects of past hurts (inner healing), deliverance of the demonised, healing of the body.

Wimber recognises, both from the N.T. and experience, that not everyone is healed. This could be to do with lack of faith, sin, disunity, praying incorrectly or a failure to persist in prayer. He appeals to Ladd's framework of the 'already and the not yet' - the fullness of the benefits of the atonement are not yet received. Yet, ' the most fundamental reason' why more people are not healed is a failure to seek God wholeheartedly for healing.

#### 6. Spiritual Warfare.

This occupies a prominent place in third wave thought. The Kingdom of God is conceived of in conflictual terms and Christians are co-belligerents with Christ in the battle being waged on earth with Satan and his demons. More recently emphasis has fallen on 'territorial spirits', especially in the works of Peter Wagner.

Wagner makes a distinction between ground and occult level spiritual conflict - dealing with demons in the context of prayer and power encounter, and strategic - level spiritual warfare. Here we are dealing with the highest concentration of demonic power, the principalities and rulers Paul spoke of in Ephesians 6: 12.

'Satan delegated high ranking members of the hierarchy of evil spirits to control nations, regions, cities, tribes, people groups, neighbourhoods and other significant social networks of human beings throughout the world. Their major assignment is to prevent God from being glorified in their territory, which they rule through directing the activities of lower ranking demons'. Because of their regional operation these powers may be called 'territorial spirits'. Wagner seeks support for this anthropological and missiological proposition throughout the Bible: Deut. 32:8 (D.S.S.); 1 Kings 20: 23-28; 2 Kings 17: 9-18, 29-31; Jer. 50:2-3; Daniel 10; Acts 19: 27,35.

The first step in strategic - level spiritual warfare is personal preparation - submission to God, confession, fasting, holiness and the like. Sins of nations and peoples can be remitted by personal identification and confession cf. Dan. 9:20. Prepared for conflict intercessors may then engage in 'spiritual mapping', e.g. as in La Plata, Argentina. This is the identification by name of territorial spirits through research and discernment, which reveals the specific nature of their operation. The biblical warrant for 'mapping' is found in Ezekiel 4:1. Once this work had been done a united group, particularly of pastors, (these possess the highest spiritual authority) may engage in authoritative praying against the powers of darkness.

## 7. Comments.

### (a) Positively

- i Correctly emphasises that the Kingdom of God arrived in power with the coming of Jesus.
- ii Awakens evangelicals to the fact of the blinding character of secular worldviews and the trans-rational nature of spiritual reality.
- iii Reminds the Church of the supernatural dimensions of the Christian life, especially in the area of evangelism. Encourages believers to expect more from God.
- iv Draws attention to the visibility and witness-value of healing in the New Testament.
- v Reminds the Church that the Kingdom of God is contested by powerful and organised spiritual forces.
- vi Emphasises the role of the whole people of God in ministry.



vii Moved away from the divisive phrase 'baptism of the Spirit' to more functional/flexible notions of 'anointing'.

(b) Negatively.

Characteristically, the deficiencies of 'third wave' theology tend to be matters of degree rather than essential substance.

i Confusion with respect to eschatology;

Wimber tends to emphasise the 'already' in opposition to the 'not yet' dimension of the Kingdom of God eg. in relation to sickness and suffering.

Third wave writers tend towards a form of historical restorationism which makes the timing of the Parousia dependent on a certain level of holiness and power in the Church. This leads in the direction of triumphalism, itself a cultural problem.

ii Methodological confusion:

a. Jesus preached the Gospel and confirmed it with 'signs and wonders' (Power Evangelism, pp 33, 85).

b. Power evangelism involves overcoming resistance by 'signs and wonders' so the gospel might be received.

c. Christians must follow the example of Jesus as in 'a'. But, the pattern in 'b' does not follow that in 'a'.

iii De-emphasises the Gospel itself:

Reaction to the word-proposition (rationalistic) character of conservative evangelicalism focussed on the Epistles. Tends to stress the identity between the message/action of Jesus and Christians today. This leads to a power versus word conflict (implicit) unknown to the N.T. Third wave advocates stress the need for the miraculous, conservatives critics stress the sufficiency of the verbal message of the gospel.

iv Fails to link the action of the cross with the power of God.:

Power seems to be primarily understood in terms of 'force' rather than in forensic, moral, or relational terms. In Reformed thought, looking to Paul, man lies under the power of the law, sin, death. (eg. Rom. 7, 1 Cor. 15) because of the power of guilt. By removing guilt (objectively) the cross breaks the grip of these powers and consequently disarms the principalities. (Col. 2:13-15)

v. Tends to be dualistic.

If power is conceived in terms of 'force' these categories necessarily imply a power continuum with man, angels, Satan and God on a gradation. If however the power of God is a moral power (holiness) essentially different qualitatively from other power (cf. 1 Cor. 1) and mediated through the gospel of the cross then the sovereignty of God is understood in a way which makes dualism impossible. Compare: 'The real pitch (of prayer) is not God-ward, but Satanward' (S D Gordon, cited in Wagner, Warfare Prayer, p.106). The natural world, with its fallenness, tends to be swallowed up in the activity of Satan, e.g. there is 'an integral unity between sickness and Satan.'

vi The 'excluded middle' is not the spiritual realm, or even the Holy Spirit as such, but the glorified God - man, Jesus Christ.

vii Tends to an experiential methodology.

Wimber sought to develop a theology of revival on the basis of his personal experience. This assumes, as with point ii above, that a pattern exists to be followed (sequentially). Wagner's basis is journalistic reporting based on church growth. He is unable to provide a clear example of 'spiritual mapping' and strategic-level warfare in the Bible.

viii Tends to a religious technology.

Principles, if identified and copied (with faith) should lead to a release of spiritual power. This amounts to a pragmatic phenomenism unknown to the Bible, but close to American (and especially Californian) culture.

The Bible tends to be used retrospectively to legitimise a strategy which is already accepted because it "works". Something is true because it has passed the test of usefulness, in this sense the approach is scientific. The criteria of "usefulness" are not however first found in scripture.

ix Tends to spiritual triumphalism

Claims seem to be made that the ingredients are to hand for spiritual breakthrough in the life of the church and individual Christians. It seems that one can master the techniques of spiritual power. This neglects the sovereignty of God. There is no integrated place for long term suffering and apparent failure. The staying power of the people of God in the midst of trials and persecutions is perhaps the most strategic power of all.

The problem with such phenomenism is that it tends to equate human responses with divine activity. Dramatic events attract more attention than a holy life. Social and psychic phenomena need to be recognised for what they are, and not spiritualised (nor demonised). To fail to do this leads at least to self-deception or manipulation, and at worst to opening oneself up to the elemental spirits of the universe.

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 8 B: CRITIQUE OF CHARISMATIC EMPHASES

#### Introduction

It has long been observed that a heresy cannot be completely false, but is a distortion of the truth. Although there have been some Christians who have dismissed the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement as a whole (G Campbell Morgan: 'The last great vomit of Satan') many more, including those within its scope, have been critical of exaggerations. Given the nature of the movement, with its emphases upon positive experience rather than doctrinal exactitude, it is to be expected that the critique focus upon areas of practical theology.

Viewed from a historical or sociological perspective it must be significant that the fountainhead of Modern Pentecostalism is the United States. North American civilisation was self-consciously built on a vision for achievement and personal prosperity, strong on individual identity and weak on community. Force of arms (military power) and an orientation towards visible growth (eg economy) combined with a lack of criticism of material values are all part of an environment which necessarily impacted deeply upon the consciousness of Christians. It would not be difficult to parallel the critique of charismatic emphases listed below with problems in the wider secular culture.

#### 1. The Cult of Prosperity.

##### (a) Outline

E W Kenyon - orthodoxy plus influences from Christian-Science (metaphysics)

K Hagin - 'name and claim'

- 'faith movement'

Doyle Harrison, K Hagin (Jnr), K Copeland, John Osteen, Narvelle Hayes, Jerry Savelle, Robert Tilton, John Avanzini etc

KJV:3 John 2; Isaiah 48:17; Mark 11:23-24; James 4:2; John 10:10.

(1) Recognise the promise

(2) Will to obey

(3) Exercise faith - positive confession releases authority and blessing, negative confession produces cursing.

Hagin: 'say it, do it, receive it, and tell it'

O.T. promises to Abraham (Gen. 24:35)  
to Israel (Deut. 28:1-14)  
to the giver (Mal. 3:10)

N.T. - 'a hundred times as much in this present age' (Mark 10:30)

Prosperity as fruit of creation, child of King, etc.

Prosperity for ? - fund ministry, enjoyment, good of others.

(b) Objections

(1) Appeals to human greed cf. Soka Gakkai (Nichiren Shoshu) 1945 - a few thousand  
1990-21 million

(2) Leads to spiritual decline and corruption. 'men of corrupt mind...who think that  
godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great  
gain...if we have food and clothing we will be content with that. People who want  
to get rich fall into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men  
into ruin and destruction. for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil..' (1  
Tim. 6:5-10)

The decline of the Puritan vision: 'piety had begotten prosperity, and the daughter  
had devoured the mother' (Cotton Mather) cf. Wesley.

Prosperity produces complacency (Deut. 32:15; Jer. 2:1-1-; Hosea 13:6)

(3) Simplistic Exegesis.

eg. 3 John 2 is a conventional 'wish prayer'

Many Scriptures speak of material loss eg. Luke 12:33, 12:29, 3:11. 9:58.

(4) Virtue to Reality.

eg. the apostles didn't receive a fishing fleet. Do third world believers all lack faith?

(5) Lack of Theological Framework

We are not in Eden

We are not in Heaven

Faith is not a force which moves God ie. God is sovereign and free, faith is a gift  
enabling us to trust.

## 2. The Quest for Power

### (a) The language of power;

Norman Vincent Peale: 'The Power of Positive Thinking': 'Prayer power is a manifestation of energy...for the release of spiritual energy...new and fresh spiritual techniques are constantly being discovered...'

Charles Capps: 'God's Creative Power Will Work for You'

Paul Y Cho: 'There are three spiritual forces in the earth. The Spirit of God, the spirit of man and the spirit of Satan...All three spirits are in the realm of the fourth dimension, so naturally spirits can hover over the material third dimension and exercise creative powers...The Holy Spirit said. "My Son, man still does not realise the spiritual power that I have given to him"...'.

C S Lovett: 'God's healing power is available through your own mind and you can trigger it - by faith!...If you had DIRECT ACCESS to your unconscious mind, you could command ANY DISEASE to be healed in a flash. That's how much power is at hand.'

John Wimber: 'Power Evangelism', 'Power Healing'

Emphasis on signs, wonders, healing, miracles etc.

'Power Team', 'victorious Christian living', 'overcoming', 'Let the power come!', 'More love, more power...'

(b) Objections;

(1) 'Power evangelicalism owes some of that power to its force of conviction: perhaps not so much to the views that are held or to the doctrines that are preached, but to the conviction and authority with which they are held and preached' (A E McGrath)

(2) The spirituality of power is just another form of triumphalism

cf. in the history of Israel, strength led to apostasy, being crushed and humiliated produces restoration.

post-Constantinian Christianity grew in Europe, S America, by force cf. Crusades, 'rice bowl Christians' etc

Rev. 3:1 'I know your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead.'

(3) The spirituality of power lacks a theology of power.

'the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength (1 Cor. 4:10)

'Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves...' (2 Cor. 3:5)

'For when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor. 12:10)

'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony' (Rev. 12:11)

cf. 2 Cor. 6:3-10; Heb. 11:23-40; 1 Pet. 4:1-2, 12-14; 5:6-11; Rev. 6:9-11; 13:9-10; 14:12-13.

The strength is in the context of self-conscious weakness

a. as a moral rather than quasi-material force.

b. as absolute dependency (faith) in God to do the work

So that the overcoming is God's and not ours, we overcome only 'in Christ'.

'Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls.' (1 Cor. 10:12)

### 3. The Need for Healing

(a) Outline

Jesus healed all who came to him, he is the same yesterday, today and forever, therefore his will is to heal all in the present time.

or Healing is provided for in the atonement (Isa. 53:4-5). The power of the shed blood of Jesus is released by faith.

It is always God's will to heal, all sickness is of the devil and it brings no glory to God. Failure to be healed means a lack of faith.

These views have connections to 'inner healing', 'healing of the memories', 'healing of the emotions' etc.

#### (b) Objections

(i) Theology of healing - Jesus didn't heal all the sick in Israel, the Kingdom of God has not come in full.

(ii) A tendency to turn inwards - 'me-centred', needs-centred. This follows the classical Augustinian definition of sin viz. turning in on oneself. Ignores the reality of sin and suffering as a moral problem *coram Deo* (before God) and not just *coram hominibus* (before man). Healing is not our highest good (not to be worshipped), God is.

The danger is that one idol power - eg. need to be accepted to be 'fulfilled', will be replaced by another - eg. self-fulfilment.

(iii) Tendency to talk about all of God's acts as 'healing' tends to squeeze out other models eg. freedom from the slavery of sin, forgiveness of debts.

(iv) The charismatic-Pentecostal movement tends to lack a positive theology of suffering.

Suffering is something to be avoided or at worst endured. Rather: 'Suffering is not the cost of glory but the way of glory'. The cross is the supreme self-revelation of God as holy love, and so his glory (paradoxically).

The same must be true of the Christian life (See the Scriptures in the previous section). Healing does not produce holiness, obedient suffering does.

NB. how this connects with various 'rapture' theories and 'last-days' teaching.

#### 4. Spiritualising

##### (a) Outline

'No man judges a prophet...People cannot put the reed of God into the hand of a man called by God, nor can they take the reed out of his hand...God clearly warns "Do not touch my anointed ones and do my prophets no harm" ' (Earl Paulk)

The authority is in the 'anointed' teacher who must not be touched/criticised because his authority comes directly from God. Claims to direct revelation, vision, trips to heaven etc are unquestionable eg. Hagin, Copeland, Bob Jones, Paul Cain, Benny Hinn. 'Power Religion' p.75.

Theology is constantly set in spiritual categories:

'In Genesis the Spirit of the Lord was incubating like a hen sitting on her eggs... We've got to learn how... to visualise and dream the answer as being completed as we go to the Lord in prayer... In that way, with the power of the Holy spirit, we can incubate that which we want God to do for us...' (P Y Cho)

'Jesus accepted the sin nature of Satan in his own spirit... made himself obedient to the Lordship of Satan at the cross' (K Copeland)

Interest in the activity of angels, e.g. audio tape of angelic singing.

(b) Objections

(i) Danger of a personality cult, denial of priesthood of all believers.

(ii) Preference for the marvelous and extraordinary over the usual and ordinary sets up people for deception.

(iii) Detaches Word and Spirit eg. anti-cognitive, lack of context (unlike gospel proclamation), separates 'Word' from 'ministry' (knowledge, wisdom etc.)

(iv) Pragmatic cf. truthful - if it 'works' it must be true.

(v) Focus on the 'spiritual' realm ignores the moral realm - lack of interest in sin, guilt, atonement, holiness, righteousness etc.

5. Dualism.

(a) Outline.

Faith teachers are anti-materialist. 'Victory' is overcoming physical limitations by spiritual power (Copeland). 'Man is a spirit who possesses a soul and lives in a body...' (Hagin). Jesus' physical death counts for nothing, it is his 'spiritual death' which is atoning - at the cross (or in Gethsemane) he takes on the nature of Satan and the curse of the law, viz. sin, sickness, poverty. Jesus, therefore, needs to be reborn spiritually in hell. By faith we too can be reborn spiritually and become incarnations of Jesus, little 'gods' living in constant victory.



All of this amounts to a functional metaphysical dualism in which matter is disregarded because Satan, this world's legitimate ruler is 'deified.'

(b) Objections.

(i) The whole person: body/soul/spirit is in the image of God (Gen 2:7; 1 Thess 5:23).

(ii) The Bible repeatedly emphasises that Jesus took flesh and atoned through his flesh.

(John 1:14; Col 1:22; 2:9; Heb 2:14-18; 1 Pet 4:1; 1 John 4:1 ff etc).

The New Testament is consistently anti-docetic.

(iii) The truth of the 'spiritual death' of the Logos is not a matter of the extinction of the nature of the Son but its (paradoxical) glory. See John 12:27-32; 13:31-32; 17:1 ff.

(iv) The descent of Jesus into hell is based on certain English translations of the creed, and lacks biblical warrant.

(v) That we may become 'gods', if true at all, has an eschatological not present reference (cf. 2 Pet 1:4). This is something to be realised in the future, and is related to present suffering in the same manner as Christ's resurrection is related to the cross (Rom 8:17).

6. Criticisms.

1. The Centrality of the Gospel.

'Do you not know...what God's estimate of the gospel is? Do you not know that it has been the chief subject of His thoughts and acts from all eternity? He looks on it as the grandest of all His works.' (Spurgeon)

'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...' (Rom. 1:16)

'I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified...so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom but on God's power'. (1 Cor. 2:2,5)

'...Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1:24)

To move away from the centrality of the gospel is to move away from the centrality of Christ. This is simply to embrace another form of anthropocentric theology. a gospel of power misses the power of the gospel - which is its ability to change the essential nature of men and women, so that their natural desires for prosperity, security, health and power become subordinate to the glory of God, which is the character of Christ.

It should not surprise us then that the modern faith movement has seen so many moral failures. 'For the simple truth is that modern evangelicalism has spawned a number of ideas and attitudes that bear a disquieting resemblance to the worst excesses of the corrupt and confused church of the late Middle Ages' (McGrath).

## 2. Heresy.

(a) The distinction between formal and material heresy needs to be observed. Most faith teachers are not self-consciously heretical.

(b) Departure from the central dogmatic core of Christian belief, especially the person and work of Christ, constitutes heresy.

## 1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 4 Week 8 C: THE TORONTO BLESSING AND BEYOND

#### 1. Preparation for Lecture

This will consist of the students availing themselves of the material in the “Toronto Blessing” file located in the library. You should have read at least one major article promoting this movement and one article opposing it. By the time of the lecture it is expected that all students will have a reasoned theological position in relation to the subject in question. You should prepare a brief precis, paying attention to some of the issues below (about one A4 page).

#### 2. Theological Issues

To help clarify matters, some of the following questions should be kept in mind:

- (1) How significant is the fact that the “Blessings” roots seem to be located in the “Word-Faith” movement (K. Copeland)?
- (2) What is the focus of its theology? For example, is it Pneumatocentric or Christocentric?
- (3) What is the principal authority of the movement: experience or the Word of God?
- (4) What are its expressed goals, and does it (in terms of (1)(2)(3) above) possess the resources to achieve them?  
Hint: Does it possess a Kingdom theology or Church theology?

#### 3. Experiential Issues

(This follows the argument in M.J. Cartledge, ‘Interpreting Charismatic experience: Hypnosis, Altered States of Consciousness and the Holy Spirit’, *JPS* 13 (1998), pp.117 – 132)

- (1) ASC’s are complex states which require multi – disciplinary research that acknowledges the lordship of God in all creation.
- (2) ASC’s are occasions of revelation in both Testaments ((Ezekiel; Acts 10; 2 Cor 12).
- (3) ASC’s occur in diverse Christian traditions: the silence of Quakers, the liturgy of Catholicism, the charismatic experience of singing in tongues and prayer ministry. The outcomes are similar; a meaningful worship experience.

(4)ASC's may be categorised as post conversion sanctification experiences.

(5)As glossolalia is a symbol of divine – human encounter, so too are the phenomena associated with the Toronto Blessing. The nature of the symbols differ, but the sign value in each case is intimacy with God. The mystery of the experience signifies the transcendence of God whilst the physicality (tongues, laughing, jumping etc.) represents the immanence of God in created humanity.

It may be the case that the master spiritual symbol for modernity was glossolalia, in postmodernism there are a diversity of symbols without one having priority. A range of phenomena possess sacramental significance. The Spirit can operate for example in falling down and risen as sacramental of dying and rising with Christ.

#### **4. Lecture Context**

This will consist of two parts:

(a) Viewing a video presentation

(b) Open Discussion.

**1340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY**

**Term 4 Week 8 D.**

**REVIEW: THEOLOGY FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE PRESENT**

A: TRADITIONAL DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

<b>THEOLOGY</b>	<b>THEOLOGICAL CENTRE</b>	<b>THEOLOGICAL METHOD</b>	<b>MAJOR STRENGTH</b>	<b>MAJOR WEAKNESS</b>
LUTHER	JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH	<i>sola scriptura</i>	GRACE ALONE	GRACE-LAW DUALISM
CALVIN	GLORY OF GOD	SPIRIT-WORD RELATION	GOD-CENTRED	REPROBATION
CALVINISM	SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD	DIVINE DECREES	TRANSCENDENCE	RATIONALISTIC
COVENANT THEOLOGY	COVENANT	COVENANT	DIVINE INITIATIVE	NON - CHRISTOCENTRIC
ARMINIANISM	HUMAN FREEDOM	DIVINE-HUMAN MUTUALITY	HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY	DIMINISHES GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY
ANGLICAN (HOOKER)	DIVINE LAW	SCRIPTURE-TRADITION-REASON	INCLUSIVE	SYNCRETISTIC
DISPENSATIONAL	DISPENSATIONS	LITERALISM	UNITY OF BIBLE	NON-CHRISTOCENTRIC

CLASSICAL R.C.	CHURCH	SCRIPTURE- TRADITION	CONTINUITY	SYNERGISM
ORTHODOX	TRINITY	MYSTICAL	DOXOLOGY	TRADITIONALISM

B: MODERN THEOLOGY

SCHLEIERMACHER	FEELING OF ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE	GOD - CONSCIOUSNESS	IMMANENCE	ANTHROPO-CENTRIC
RITSCHL	KINGDOM OF GOD	VALUE - JUDGEMENT	RELIGION AS PRACTICAL	MORALISM
von HARNACK	GOSPEL	KERNEL AND HUSK	HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT	INDIVIDUALISTIC
BARTH	WORD OF GOD	DIALECTICAL	CHRISTOCENTRIC	DISCONTINUITY
BRUNNER	WORD OF GOD	BIBLICAL - PERSONALISM	CHRISTOCENTRIC	SUBJECTIVISM
BONHOEFFER	WORD OF GOD	DIALECTICAL	TOTAL DEMAND OF GOD	AMBIGUITY
KIERKEGAARD	JESUS CHRIST	CHRISTIAN - EXISTENTIALISM	TRANSCENDENCE	SUBJECTIVISM
BULTMANN	EXISTENCE	DE-MYTHOLOGISING	NON - OBJECTIVIST	GOD - UNKNOWABLE
TILlich	ULTIMATE CONCERN	METHOD OF CORRELATION	UNITY OF EXISTENCE	IMMANENTISM
SECULAR THEOLOGY	SECULARISM	RELIGIOUS EXISTENTIALISM	AWARENESS OF MODERNITY	NON-ESCHATOLOGICAL
RAUSCHENBUSCH	KINGDOM OF GOD	SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS	SOCIAL CONCERN	IDEALISM
NIEBUHR	PRACTICAL THEOLOGY	DRAMATIC - HISTORICAL	SOCIAL CONCERN	NON-HISTORICAL HOPE
EVANGELICALISM	GOSPEL	GRAMMATICAL - HISTORICAL	GOSPEL - CENTRED	RATIONALISM

FUNDAMENTALISM	BIBLE	LITERALISM	SCRIPTURE	RATIONALISM
FORSYTH	CROSS	BELIEVING - CRITICISM	HOLINESS OF GOD	LITTLE PNEUMATOLOGY
WARFIELD	BIBLE	GRAMMATICAL - HISTORICAL	AUTHORITY OF BIBLE	RATIONALISM
BERKOUWER	GRACE	CO-RELATIONSHIP	GRACE	NON-SOCIAL
THIELICKE	WORD OF GOD	NON-CARTESIAN THEOLOGY	KERYGMATIC	LAW - GRACE DUALISM
CULLMANN	CHRIST	SALVATION - HISTORY	HISTORICAL UNITY	HISTORICIST
PANNENBERG	HISTORY	CRITICAL HISTORY	THEOLOGY OF RESURRECTION	HISTORICIST
PROCESS THEOLOGY	BECOMING	METAPHYSICS	ANTIHELLENISTIC	NON-THEISTIC
MOLTMANN	HOPE	SALVATION - HISTORY	ESCHATOLOGICAL	IMMANENTISM
VATICAN II	CHURCH	SCRIPTURE - TRADITION	BIBLE	AMBIVALENCE
RAHNER	REVELATION	TRANSCENDENTAL	GOD - HUMAN RELATION	INCLUSIVE
SCHILLEBEECK	SALVATION	TRANSCENDENTAL	PRACTICAL RELIGION	NON- CHRISTOCENTRIC
KUNG	BASIC TRUST	CRITICAL RATIONALITY	APOLOGETIC THEOLOGY	HISTORICAL CRITICISM
BLACK	BLACKNESS	LIBERATION	SOCIAL LIBERATION	ETHNOCENTRIC



LIBERATION	POOR	PRAXIS	PROPHETIC CHALLENGE	DOMINANCE OF PRAXIS
FEMINIST	WOMEN	HERMENEUTICS OF SUSPICION	VALUE OF WOMEN	GENDER - CENTRED
CREATION	CREATION	SPIRITUAL JOURNEY	VALUE OF CREATED BEING	NON - THEISTIC
EDWARDS	GOD	PROTESTANT SCHOLASTICISM	TRANSCENDENCE	RATIONALISM
FINNEY	SALVATION	THEOLOGICAL SYNCRETISM	HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY	PRAGMATISM

#### C: CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY

CLASSICAL PENTECOSTALISM	BAPTISM OF SPIRIT	PNEUMATIC EXEGESIS	DIVINE POWER	SUBJECTIVISM
CHARISMATIC	WORK OF SPIRIT	SYNTHESIS	WORK OF SPIRIT	INWARD
THIRD WAVE	KINGDOM OF GOD	NARRATIVE THEOLOGY	DIVINE INTERVENTION	NON - CRUCIFORM

## 340: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

### Term 2 Week 8 E: PROSPECTS: AGENDA FOR THEOLOGY OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

#### 1. Introduction.

The future history of theology must be as unpredictable as the sovereign action of a free and gracious God on the one hand and rebellious humanity on the other hand. Some expectations however are relatively confident, simply being projections of recent trends.

#### 2. Issues

##### (1) The de-Westernising of theology.

- the development of indigenous theologies in Asia and Africa.

##### (2) The de - Hellenising of theology

- rejection of Greek metaphysics eg. Jung Young Lee's Yin-Yang theology.

##### (3) Theological Pluralism

- ecumenical theology
- 'world theology'
- loss of cohesiveness of confessional traditions eg. Reformed.

##### (4) Theology of technology and science

- reconsideration of an epistemology of science.
- scientism and anti-scientism
- technology as a theological question
- what does it mean to be human (artificial intelligence)

##### (5) Post modernism

- the rejection of the modern enterprise as an attempt to know in an absolute way.
- the replacement of the study of history with historicism
- the denial of transcendence.

(6) Theology of the Ecological - Population Crisis

- a global theology
- the cosmic Christ
- a retreat to chiliasm.

(7) Theology and Religious Studies

- objective versus committed
- phenomenological versus doctrinal
- non confessional versus confessional
- universities versus other institutions (or no institutions at all)

(8) A Conservative Consensus

- reconciliation of Evangelical and Pentecostal theology on the basis of a Christocentric method.
- a holistic approach to the gospel (evangelism, healing, social justice)
- rejection of individualism.

3.4 Narrative theology (theology as story)

1. Origins and history

a. Middle Ages, Protestant scholasticism - theology as systematic presentation of revealed truths. Revelation as true propositions.

b. Enlightenment rationalism - general principles which could be established by reason, history at best supportive. Deductive approach. (Both a. and b. emphasise ideas.)

c. Rudolf Bultmann (1884 - 1976) - 'demythologisation', Christian existentialism [] 'death of God' movement. Meaning of Jesus' life contained solely in the proclamation, not external reality of history

c. Propositional (extrinsic) and existential (subjective) approaches to revelation seemed at a dead end

d. Erich Auerbach : Mimesis : The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (1946)

(i) superior realism of biblical narrative to classical literature (Homer)

(ii) narrative challenges the reader to enter into the world of the text, not vice-versa.

e. H. Richard Niebuhr : The Meaning of Revelation (1941)

(i) revelation of God comes through the medium of history

(ii) most appropriate literary form to represent this was narrative ie. a story

(iii) revelation connects 'outer' history (God's) with 'inner' history (ours)

(iv) revelation illuminates the meaning of our history by continually calling us back to God's actions in external history

(v) this is the basis for the formation of the identity of an individual or community (Church)

g. Barth : Church Dogmatics

(i) Scripture as the 'story of God' Jesus Christ as the objective content of revelation

(ii) revelation becomes a reality in the individual or community

(iii) Word of God effects an involvement of my history with the history of Jesus Christ

h. Biblical Theology Movement

(i) G.Ernest Wright : The God Who Acts : Biblical Theology as Recital (1952)

(ii) Bible as event plus interpretation - a confessional telling of a story about God

(iii) Focus not an historical facticity but the function of narrative within the canon of Scripture.

i North American theologians (1970's on)

(i) Yale Divinity School: Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, Ronald Thiemann

(ii) James Gustafson, Stanley Hauerwas etc.

(iii) 'postliberalism'

2. Features of narrative theology

a. Primacy of narrative in Scripture

(i) scope, diversity eg. OT histories, Gospels, parables

(ii) creeds exist in narrative form (Apostles', Nicene)

(iii) to have faith in Jesus is to believe that the details of his history have saving importance.

b. Avoids the abstraction of much of theology.

Invites us to reflect upon a story - people, events etc. not just ideas.

Appeal to imagination, realism, personal involvement.

c. God has made his story interact with our story in the history of Jesus.

It is this collision of stories which leads to conversion.

Story of the bible provides the framework for identity of Christian and church.

Ethics - Hauerwas, narrative approach to ethics. Self is best understood in terms of a story. Priority of ethical person over ethical action(s) in Bible.

Gospels set out a pattern of life and behaviour, in Jesus, appropriate to all Christian believers. The effect of being encountered by God and being transformed by his grace.

d. Narrative effectively conveys the tension between the limited knowledge of human beings in the story and the omniscience of God eg. Job.

3. Limitations of narrative theology

a. Why should the Christian narrative be regarded as authoritative, or the only authoritative narrative?

- relativizing of religious traditions

- need to appeal to authority and self-sufficiency of Scripture ie. circular

argument

b. Danger of forgetting that the human story is judged by God, and is only resolved eschatologically. The gospel of Christ is never captured or finds adequate expression in the culture of the community of God's people.

c. How can the truth of a narrative be established apart from the historical considerations neglected by narrative theology.

Postmodernism denies any given interpretation of a text is true.

Narrative theology cannot deal with this objection.

