

Theological Anthropology

*a collection of papers prepared by
Faith and Unity Commissioners
of the National Council of Churches in Australia*

Introduction

Theological anthropology – a study of the human person in conversation with the doctrinal framework of particular religious traditions – is by no means a new discipline. If anything, it has fallen from favour and a regular, or easily recognisable, place on theological curricula over the last four decades, despite the efforts of scholars such as Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthassar in the 1960s.

The need to investigate the human person precisely as a being open to transcendence, as identified by Rahner, is undiminished, however, in a new century which already looks set to challenge for its predecessor's mantle of 'our worst yet'. Moreover a natural disaster on the scale of the tsunamis which recently struck parts of Asia demands a theology of the human person which is credible in the face of immense and apparently arbitrary suffering, and our collective vulnerability. It must also be one which takes fully seriously the religious and cultural pluralism which has always characterised the human family, but which – in our ever-shrinking world – is an inescapable reality for more members of that family than ever before.

The Faith and Unity Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia has taken its lead in this regard from the study "Ecumenical Perspectives on Theological Anthropology" begun in 1999 by the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order. Faith and Order perceived that the lack of a major and truly ecumenical study on theological anthropology represented a serious stumbling block to the goal of visible unity.

The aims of this WCC study – now well advanced (see FO/2004:11 (Rev.) May 2004) – are:

- to identify what the churches can say together about the nature of being human, paying particular attention to our being made in the image of God;
- to encourage churches, on the basis of these areas of agreement, to work together on the spiritual, ethical, and material challenges facing humanity today; and
- to identify remaining differences in the churches' understanding of human nature and – where these impair visible unity – to suggest ways of overcoming them.

(Extracted from FO/2004:60, July 2004)

The brief for the working group established by the Standing Commission of Faith and Order was not to produce a 'textbook' on theological anthropology such as Rahner or von Balthassar compiled. Rather, it was asked to choose and examine a limited sample of theological-anthropological issues which highlight the challenges faced by churches in today's world relating to Christian understandings of the nature and purpose of being human. Appropriate to this task, topics covered in the consultations underpinning the study include biotechnology, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, so-called 'disability', violence and poverty, and the environmental impact of anthropocentrism.

The NCCA study on theological anthropology is more modest in scope, but touches on a number of themes and concerns held in common with the WCC project – especially the *imago Dei*.

Of the nine papers gathered here, five are written specifically from the perspective of particular ecclesial traditions. Sobhi Attia offers an Orthodox view of soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) as 'deification' – human participation in the divine fellowship and communion – based on creation in the image of God. Lutheran commissioner, Peter Kriewaldt, introduced a paper by Mark Worthing, which outlines this tradition's no less relational view of salvation as

that righteousness which is the image of God restored in Christ. So too – reflecting recent Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue on justification – Gerard Kelly, writing from the latter standpoint; only here the christological focus is given a strongly eschatological dimension: in Christ as the *logos* at work in creation itself, we already participate in God’s final vision for humankind made in the divine image. In Salvationist theology, this participation – again derived from the divine-human relationship implicit in creation – becomes an imperative for holiness of life, and partnership in the work of salvation and sanctification, as Jim Weymouth and Graham Roberts explain in the paper on which they collaborated. And Bill Jaggs shows how a Quaker view of human nature shares this openness towards human perfectibility by the universal virtue of Christ’s saving death, without ever failing to take human corruptibility into account.

The two Anglican contributions, from Colleen O’Reilly and Charles Sherlock, are equally grounded in the theological issues to the fore in this ecclesial communion, addressing doctrine of the human person from feminist and gender perspectives respectively. Any genuinely Christian anthropology, O’Reilly argues, must not shrink from the struggle with male/female dualism which feminist theology seeks to deconstruct in order to retrieve the parity of Genesis 1:27 (cf. Galatians 3:27-28). Sherlock stresses instead the particularity of male and female embodiedness, and challenges the reduction of gender issues to sexuality.

An exegetical overview of Genesis 1:26-28 from Uniting Church commissioner, Morag Logan, raises broader questions concerning an ecumenical approach to hermeneutics – also on Faith and Order’s agenda at the present time – reminding churches that these studies call us to ‘show our workings’ and to be accountable for the particular readings of Scripture which they generate. UCA colleague, Chris Mostert, currently Chair of the Faith and Unity Commission, brings a Trinitarian lens to the notion of human personhood in the image of divine personhood in order to describe the Church as a proleptic expression of redeemed sociality. Here we come full circle from Attia’s paper, with salvation understood not so much as ‘theosis’ (akin to deification, above) but as ‘anthroposis’: our becoming more fully and authentically human as our relationships participate in the divine *koinonia*. The ecumenical implications of this are obvious, and constitute a call to the churches which echoes that of the WCC theological anthropology study (extracted from FO/2004:11 (Rev.), may 2004, §IV):

- to see the image of God in ourselves and every person;
- to cultivate the human capacity to act justly, to be merciful, to make peace and to create beauty; to be inclusive communities where diversity is affirmed and where excluded persons are welcomed and find their dignity recognised; and
- to work for the visible unity of the Church with penitence and vigour, knowing that divisions between Christians often reflect and exacerbate the brokenness of the human community.

I join with other members of the National Council of Churches in Australia Faith and Unity Commission in warmly commending these papers and the WCC study to local churches as an instrument for that visible unity, and as a resource for our common mission.

Richard Treloar
28 January, 2005

Made in the Image of God: Understandings of Genesis 1:26-28

No single biblical text has been more important in the understanding of theological ‘anthropology’ than the first three chapters of Genesis, particularly Genesis 1:26-28.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth”.

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them,
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth”.¹

There has been a great deal of debate about the meaning of these verses of Genesis, both within biblical studies and more widely in theological discussion. This paper intends to explore the range of meanings particularly of the idea of humanity being created in the image of God, considering other aspects of the passage as they are important within this discussion.² The starting point from which I move is that of biblical interpretation, with a focus on the period following the rise of critical biblical scholarship.³

Within critical biblical scholarship, there has been a range of understandings of the meaning of the creation of humanity “in our image, according to our likeness”. It seems helpful to consider the following general understandings and questions:

- Is there a difference between “image” and “likeness” and “in” our image and “according to” our likeness?
- The place of non-biblical parallels, particularly the significance of royal ideology
- Physical versus spiritual likeness
- The significance of Barth and dialectical theology
- The context of the phrase and the questions this raises
- The significance of male and female both being created in God’s image

¹ NRSV

² This is to leave aside a number of issues raised by this passage, such as the use of the plural in reference to God, which has itself generated a number of different interpretations from the plural referring to an essentially polytheistic concept of a heavenly court surrounding God to this being a nascent trinitarian reference.

³ I.e., following the documentary hypothesis of Wellhausen (1878). In preparing this paper, I acknowledge reliance on the doctoral thesis of Gunnlauger Jönson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research*. This thesis spends considerable time exploring the significance of the P source in the understanding of interpreters, which is not taken up in this paper. This thesis, however, provides much of the summary material on which I have based this paper – leading perhaps to a greater emphasis on European scholarship than might have been my norm.

1. Is there a difference between “image” and “likeness” and “in” our image and “according to” our likeness?

It is a common interpretational move of the Church Fathers, and later in scholasticism, to maintain a distinction between the image and the likeness (*imago* and *similitudo*). This is first found in Irenaeus, and is a way of tackling the problem of what remains within humanity after the fall, and what is lost through sin. By making distinction between image and likeness, it was possible to argue that image refers to the human nature, which cannot be lost; likeness refers to the original relation to God, which was.

On the whole, this distinction has not been maintained in biblical scholarship. Etymologically, the two words, image and likeness, have overlapping semantic ranges. Both words, image and likeness, have contexts in which they mean a direct physical resemblance,⁴ both also have a more abstract meaning as well.⁵ It is a reasonable, and generally accepted, understanding to regard these words as synonymous in this context. A similar argument can be made with the two propositions, translated in the NRSV as “in” and “according to” God’s image and likeness: no clear distinction in meaning can be made on linguistic grounds.

This has been the understanding within biblical criticism throughout the whole period I am considering, with only very few exceptions. Franz Delitzsch⁶, very early in the critical period, maintains the distinction, based mainly on the Greek and Latin fathers, although he does attempt to make an etymological argument from Arabic.

This clear understanding of critical biblical scholarship, which represents a rejection of the exegesis of the Greek and Latin Fathers, is of great significance for discussion of this passage in an ecumenical setting. Critical biblical scholarship, particularly of the first testament, has been dominated by Protestant scholars, and is of its greatest significance within the churches of the reformation. Its dominance is lesser in other church traditions, especially those who place a higher regard on tradition.

2. The place of non-biblical parallels, particularly the significance of royal ideology

The significance of non-biblical parallels has waxed and waned in biblical scholarship. At times, the existence of extra-biblical parallels seems to have been all that is of significance to biblical scholars, at times extra-biblical parallels have been used only negatively. There have been some enormous insights, however, raised by such parallels for understandings of the idea of the creation of humanity in the image of God. This is a rare concept, biblically. It occurs only in the early chapters of Genesis (Genesis 1, also 5:1-3 and 9:6). The concept is not explained, and does not re-appear. This both strengthens the need to turn to extra-biblical sources, and also makes it more plausibly argued as a borrowed concept.

The most significant insight offered is related to royal ideology. In both Egypt and Mesopotamia, there are strong traditions firstly that the image of a god is the god’s deputy, empowered to act on the god’s behalf. The second strong element of the Egyptian and

⁴ e.g., 1 Samuel 6:5 images of mice and tumors, and 2 Kings 16:10, the likeness and a model of an altar is sent from Damascus to Jerusalem.

⁵ See Psalm 39:6, where “image” refers to the substantial nature of human life, and Psalm 73:20, where it refers to a dream image retained on waking. “Likeness” is also not necessarily physical, see Isaiah 13:4 where it is used to describe a sound. For both these words, however, their primary meaning is a physical similarity.

⁶ New Commentary on Genesis Vol. 1 (E.Tr. 1888)

Mesopotamian tradition is that the king is the image of the god – and therefore deputised to act in the place of the god amongst the king’s people.⁷

The significance of this extra-biblical parallel lies in the shift that is made as the idea is transported into Israelite thought. There is a “democratisation” at this point in Genesis. Not only the king, but all humanity is the image of God, deputised to act as God’s representative on earth. This essential valuing of all people, and the relating of all to God is an enormous move to make.

3. Physical versus spiritual likeness

There has been a significant variance in interpretations in the understanding of the “image” and “likeness” as to whether this “image” relates to a physical resemblance, a spiritual resemblance, or both (or neither!). Gunkel⁸ argued that the divine likeness referred only to external form. Gunkel saw this as an ancient (possibly primitive) understanding within the biblical text, and this forms part of his reflection of the traditional Church interpretation of his time. In another, rather more unusual interpretation, Kohler continued the idea of the physical nature of the resemblance of the image to argue that it was to be found in the upright form of humans.⁹

This line of interpretation has also been followed, much more recently, by Weinfeld. Weinfeld argues for an early dating of the P source, and argues that the physical resemblance of the image of God is related to the early date of the P source, and represents a fundamental Jewish understanding of the text.¹⁰

The argument for a spiritual resemblance is made early by Dillman and Driver¹¹, and was part of reactions to Darwinism. The spiritual resemblance present in the creation of humanity in the image of God was seen as what separated humanity from the animals, particularly from the higher primates.

More recently, the force of this debate has lessened within the Christian interpretation. Following particularly on the interpretation of von Rad and Barr, many have come to see the physical/spiritual discussion as “misguided”(von Rad’s words).¹² The notion of a clear distinction between the physical or material and the spiritual and immaterial is simply not clearly made in the biblical texts and in Hebrew thought. In Vriezen’s explanation, there is a holistic view of humanity in these texts, and the image of God understanding needs also to receive a holistic interpretation.¹³ This also is frequently reliant on the understandings from Barth.

⁷ With different emphases, this is developed by Hehn, in Festschrift E. Shachau, Berlin, 1915. Engell, in “Knowledge and Life in the Creation Story”, VTSup 3 (1955) 103-119 continues the royal theme to an extreme extent, seeing Adam as a divine king, enthroned in the creation narratives. Schmidt’s essential argument theologically is that the first commandment is the centre of biblical theology (*The Faith of the Old Testament*, 1986). His work on the *imago Dei* question consists in a focus on the image as a kingly role and as a sole mediator between God and humanity, representing the King on earth (ibid, 1986). This association is also commonly taken up by later exegetes, see Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, and Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 1984.

⁸ Gunkel, *Creation in the Old Testament*, 1894, pp.25-52

⁹ Cited by Jönsson, p. 109

¹⁰ Mostly in *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 1972

¹¹ Dillman, *Genesis, critically and exegetically expounded*, 1897, and Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 1926.

¹² In *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, “The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation”.

¹³ Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 1958. The idea of the image of God is central to Vriezen’s theology, and becomes an organising principle of it.

4. The significance of Barth and the dialectical theology

The influence of Barth on twentieth century theology is, beyond doubt, enormous. It is also commonly recognised that Barth has had an enormous impact on understandings of New Testament texts, particularly Romans. What is less recognised is the influence of Barth on Old Testament interpretation. The importance of revelation to Barth, the distinctiveness of Christianity, and opposition to “religion” all had enormous influences on Biblical study – leading to a decline of a “history of religions” approach, a lessening of the importance of extra-biblical material for a significant period of time, and a focussing on Christological interpretation.

In particular, Barth’s understanding of the *imago Dei* brings about a shift in understanding within OT interpretation. First, to Barth the plural in v.26 refers to a plurality in the divine world, and so a relatedness in the divine world. To Barth, the image of God “is not a quality of man... It does not consist in anything that man is or does. It consists, as man himself consists, as the creature of God. He would not be man if he were not the image of God”. The other thing, to Barth, that we are told about humanity is also of their plurality: consisting of male and female. The meaning of the image of God is shifted to the question of relationship.

This interpretation has remained significant, influencing von Rad and Vriezen. It was a highly significant interpretation in forming Westermann’s comments (where Barth is quoted). Westermann¹⁴ places emphasis on the image of God being in the human who can be addressed by God as ‘You’, and who is an ‘I’ who can be responsible before God. This seems to look forward rather obviously to Genesis 3. A similar significance can be seen in Brueggemann’s interpretation, where it is significant that God speaks only to humans.

5. The context of the phrase, and the questions this raises

James Barr is a major figure in OT interpretation over the past 30 years, particularly for some of his earlier works. Barr’s major impact has been in methodological critique, particularly in semantics.¹⁵ This critique argued clearly and persuasively against the use of “word studies” and “concept studies”, particularly where these studies resulted in the interpretation relying on etymology, much more than on context. Barr argued that the basic unit for interpretation should not be the individual word, but rather the sentence: “the distinctiveness of biblical thought has to be settled on the sentence level, that is, by the things the writers say, and not by the words they say them with.”¹⁶

This has had a large influence on biblical interpretation, but has a particular impact on the question of this paper – the image of God. Barr’s shift in understanding led to a reading of the larger context of the passage, and the understanding that the image of God primarily relates to humanity’s place in the world. The image of God consists in being placed to rule, or have dominion over the rest of the created order.

This then leads into the questions raised now by ecological issues. The *imago Dei* concept became central in environmental debates at one stage following an article by an American historian Lynn White.¹⁷ White’s article argues that the Genesis 1 passage is foundational to destructive Western patterns of understanding the relationship of humans to their environment.

¹⁴ *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*

¹⁵ *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 1961.

¹⁶ Barr, p.270.

¹⁷ “The historical roots of our Ecological Crisis”, in *Science*, 145, 1967.

This interpretation has been resisted by biblical scholars. Reventlow¹⁸, in particular, argues that the creation accounts stress the place for humanity is in acting in harmony in creation. Interpretations in this area have also been combined with the earlier influence of royal ideology: humans “have dominion” by being the representatives of God on earth, and are therefore to exercise this in the way that God would exercise dominion – and God’s commands at this stage involve the flourishing of all life, so that the world is teeming and swarming with life, not with the destruction of life.¹⁹

6. The significance of male and female both being created in God’s image

This text has been very important within feminist biblical interpretation. For Phyllis Trible, the Genesis 1:26-28 passage provides her with an interpretational key with which to interpret the scriptures.²⁰ She sees this passage as providing a fundamentally equal view of male and female, and proceeds to interpret other biblical texts. The text also opens up, for Trible, the understanding that the Creator, also, is neither male nor female. This interpretation has not gone unchallenged. Bird²¹, another feminist scholar, argues that Trible’s interpretation falsely separates vss 26-28 from the surrounding material, and from the rest of the P source, which nowhere else proclaims the equality of the sexes.

The importance of this passage, with its inclusion equally of men and women, is significant. This was taken up by the WCC in a consultation, which led to the publication, “in God’s Image: Reflections on Identity, Human Wholeness and the Authority of Scripture”. It is stated that “women and men are representative of a collective humanity and are co-equally models for the human. A representing of this affirmation of human wholeness and mutuality is foundational for a renewed biblical and theological understanding of the fullness of human personhood for both women and men.”²²

The passage, Genesis 1:26-28, does indeed present women and men equally. There is no hierarchy established here, and both are fully recognised making up the image of God. The question remains, however, of the significance of this affirmation, when it does fly in the face of a great weight of other material which makes different assumptions. The coupling of this image of God discussion with a discussion of the authority of scripture in the WCC discussion is a significant one, as that is where such questions lead. What weight is given to different biblical texts, what to traditional interpretation, and why?

Concluding Discussion

My purpose in writing here has been to start a discussion, firstly on the interpretations of the idea of *imago Dei*, and so into theological anthropology, but also as a different way of looking at questions of ecumenical hermeneutics. My own starting place has been clear: I am a biblical scholar by training, and have kept the focus of the discussion largely in that area. I am also a feminist scholar. This has not dominated the material presented here (I don’t think, anyway), but certainly fuels my interest in this particular passage and some of the ways that it has been taken up.

¹⁸ Reventlow, *Problems of Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 1985.

¹⁹ Thordarson, Anderson and Brueggemann.

²⁰ *God and the Rhetoric or Sexuality*

²¹ “Male and Female He Created Them: Gen. 1:27b in the Context of the P Account of Creation”, *HTR* 74 (1981).

²² p.52

This discussion has been largely of historical interpretations, and a presentation of the range of understandings that has arisen in the course of critical biblical study. If I was to finish by nailing my colours to the mast, the following are what I regard to be of critical importance from this material.

1. The inclusion of women and men in the image of God is a central part of this passage, and a part that speaks to our generation particularly.
2. The image of God relates to being God's representative on earth. In this passage this understanding, once applied only to the king, is proclaimed as true of all people, and so leads to the valuing of all people.
3. The nature of humanity proclaimed here fundamentally based on humanity as part of creation, having dominion as God has dominion over creation. This brings care of the created world to the fore as a part of the nature of humanity. Humans are responsible to bring about the flourishing of life.

I take up these in particular, out of all the material, because they seem to me to be true to the text, they are defensible interpretations; and because they strike me as being the most relevant to the concerns of our time.

Morag Logan

The Human Person in Recent Protestant Theology

A. Introduction

Among the most basic and interesting themes to consider in a theological study of the human person are the following: our creation in (or according to, or to be) the image of God, our existence as ‘fallen’ and sinful (i.e. as sinner and as part of a sinful, broken, estranged world), and our creation as ‘persons’, including the theme of sociality. It would be self-deluding to think that one could say something significant about each of these themes – or even one of them – in a paper as brief as this.

What might be attempted so briefly is an indication of the necessity of bringing christological, trinitarian, ecclesiological and eschatological considerations to bear on the discussion of anthropology. It is impossible to think of our creation to be the image of God without underscoring the major christological point that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). Moreover, if Jesus Christ has restored the *imago Dei* to humankind, as the Fathers thought, it is surely as much under the eschatological proviso—in a significant sense *already* so but *not yet* fully so—as every other way of speaking about the reality of salvation is; it is *already* a reality now but we also await our salvation *in hope*. If we are created *as* persons—and to *be* persons—the connection between the Persons of the Trinity and human persons must also be a necessary part of the discussion.¹ And the church comes into the discussion as the community called into being by the Gospel, in which we can be persons-in-communion and begin to enter into an experience of ‘redeemed sociality’². Again, of course, this new experience is subject to the eschatological proviso; we experience it fragmentarily, proleptically. What follows is an attempt to say a word about these inter-connections.

B. Created to be the Image of God

Traditionally, Christian theology has understood the human being to have been created in an original state of perfection, ‘in the image of God’ (Gen. 1:27). Already Irenaeus’ distinction—which cannot now be thought to have a solid exegetical basis—between the ‘image’ and the ‘likeness’ of God is a challenge to a view of the *imago Dei* which locates it mainly in the past. There is a long history of theological dispute over the meaning of our creation in the image of God, not least over the extent to which it was lost in the Fall.

Broadly speaking, there are three main streams of thought about the meaning of the *imago Dei*. (1) In the representative or functional view, what is emphasised is the functions which humankind carries out on behalf of God. In Gen. 1:26 the connection between *the imago Dei* and the

¹ Among recent works taking up this theme see Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996) and Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (eds), *Persons, Divine and Human* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991).

² The phrase comes from Daniel Hardy’s excellent chapter, ‘Created and Redeemed Sociality’, in Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (eds), *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989).

task of exercising dominion over the rest of creation is close.³ Our creation in the image of God is for the purpose of having dominion over all things. (2) A second view locates the *imago Dei* in some particular aspect of our being, whether psychological, moral, or spiritual; it is seen as an actual characteristic, not a particular function. Support for such a view might be found in Gen. 5:1-3, in which Adam's resemblance to God parallels Seth's resemblance to Adam. (3) In the relational view, the image of God is seen principally in the capacity for relationship with other human beings, and ultimately with God. For Barth, for example, the image of God is not in what we do or in what we are, but lies in our partnership with God.⁴

Christian theology cannot by-pass the association of the image (*eikon*) of God with Jesus Christ, an idea most strikingly found in Col. 1:15-20.⁵ Christ is the image of God *par excellence*; he is what we are called to be—and destined to be. He is the firstborn of all creation, and the firstborn from the dead. The same writer sees *our* life as 'hidden with Christ in God', to be revealed with Christ in glory (3:3-4). In relation to Christ, humankind may attain (or arrive) at the image of God. St Paul speaks of those who are called being conformed to the image of [God's] Son' (Rom. 8:29). What is in view here is the future reality of our likeness to Christ, in whom the image of God exists perfectly. This is an eschatological reality, but through the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our weakness (8:26), we know ourselves to be already on the way. Already we are 'being transformed into the same image', an image of the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

To be in the image of God, in conformity to the image of Christ, in the community of the church, is not only a gift; it is also set before us as an identity into which to grow. It is a task set before us as well as a gift given to us. As Christ transfigures us through the Spirit, our sociality—our *koinonia*, our relationships—must itself be changed and change. The church, and through it the world, must itself be renewed, and this, too, is both gift and task. The task is to bring our relationships with other people and with the world of nature into harmony with our identity as persons created to be in the divine image.⁶

C. Sinful and redeemed humanity

The awareness of the ambiguity and brokenness of human experience is common among human beings. The idea of a fatal flaw, a fundamental weakness or contradiction, is a great theme in literature. Anthropologist Helmuth Plessner speaks of 'a quarrel with the self from which there is no escape'.⁷ St Paul expressed it classically, 'I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do ... When I want to do what is good, *evil* lies close at hand' (Rom. 7:15-21). In fact, sin has deceived and killed him, worked death in him, dwelt within him (7:11-17). We are 'slaves of sin' (6:20). This sets us in opposition to God, alienates us from the world and from others, and puts us at odds with ourselves. Sin is deeply embedded in the conditions of human existence and arises out of the tension between our ego-centricity and exo-centricity. The former is our natural condition, but it becomes sinful when it presses our exo-centricity into its service.

³ See also Psalm 8:6ff.; all things have been put under humankind.

⁴ God 'willed the existence of a being which in all its non-deity and therefore its differentiation can be a real partner; which is capable of action and responsibility in relation to God' (*Church Dogmatics* III/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 184f.). Our being male or female is the reflection of this partnership, and is the true way of being human, and therefore it is the true creaturely reflection of the image of God (186).

⁵ In particular, v.15; but see also 2 Cor. 4:4.

⁶ Jürgen Moltmann speaks of our being 'God's proxy in the community of creation', precisely as the image of God. J. Moltmann, *God in Creation* (London: SCM, 1985), 188.

⁷ H. Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (1928, 1965), 299; quoted in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 82.

The idea of original sin avoids trivialising sin; sin is universal, it is profound, and there is an undeniable solidarity in sin. To speak about sin is to speak of something radical. Emil Brunner wrote that we are ‘human beings who not only sin now and then ... but whose very being is defined as sin.’⁸ Sin is also universal; all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The figure of Adam, so important for Paul as a symbol for humanity under the rule of sin, expresses this universality. The idea of original sin also highlights the fact that sin is structural before it is personal. Pannenberg writes, ‘Human beings do not first become sinners through their own actions ...; they are already sinners before any action of theirs’.⁹

‘Sin’ and ‘salvation’ are correlative terms, and the New Testament understands sin from the side of its having been overcome. If sin is fundamentally a turning *away* from God, this is seen most profoundly in the light of Christ, who turns us *toward* God and restores us to God. We know the power and magnitude of estrangement most truly when we know the depth and breadth of the reconciliation which God effects in Jesus Christ. Again, as when we consider our creation in the image of God, anthropology and christology blend into each other.

D. Human personhood

Central in a theological anthropology is the concept of ‘person’. Christian theology has been working with this notion from patristic times. Not only was God to be understood as personal, but the doctrines of the person of Christ and the Trinity have the concept of ‘person’ at their centre. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three Persons, who are what they are by their relations to each others. The Holy Trinity is a communion of Persons-in-relation. When, as part of the doctrine of creation, we assert that God has created humankind, we affirm that God has created us to be ‘persons’, persons-in-relation. God relates to us and deals with us as persons, gives us our identity in relation to God, and sets us in communities in which we learn to be persons. The church is the community in which, it is to be hoped, people have a rich experience of ‘being as communion’,¹⁰ of personhood-in-relation. As suggested in the introduction, the notion of ‘person’ brings together anthropology, christology, trinitarian theology, ecclesiology and eschatology. To illustrate this, I refer to a number of theses articulated by Colin Gunton.¹¹

In his true humanity, Jesus Christ, the image of God, is ‘the basis for understanding the created destiny of humanity as well as the human contradiction of this destiny and its recreation in Christ’.¹² In Gunton’s second and third theses, he proposes that ‘human being as relational being is rooted in the relationship of the triune God to humanity’, and that this is also ‘the condition of the possibility of adequate relational existence.’¹³ This relationship of God to humankind is established by the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. In faith, human beings are called to live in conformity with Christ. This is not possible as a human achievement but is a matter of God’s justifying grace.¹⁴ In this grace human beings are re-located in relation to God and the world and what it means to be human is re-defined. The ecclesial element in this complex of theological *loci* is indicated in the eighth thesis: ‘The Church as the community of faith is the personal and communal expression of the recreation of humanity’s created sociality

⁸ Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), 116.

⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 119f.

¹⁰ The phrase is taken from the title of John D. Zizioulas’ work, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993).

¹¹ See ‘Human Being as Relational Being: Twelve Theses for a Christian Anthropology’, in Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (eds), *Persons, Divine and Human*, 141-165.

¹² Gunton, ‘Human Being as Relational Being’, 144.

¹³ Gunton, ‘Human Being as Relational Being’, 142.

¹⁴ Gunton, ‘Human Being as Relational Being’, 153f.

as redeemed sociality.’¹⁵ The central feature of a ‘redeemed sociality’ in the church is the reconciliation of personal freedom and personal communion, each seen as grounded in God’s relationship to humankind. The result, in Gunton’s view, is not that we become divine, but that we become more human.¹⁶ This life of renewed (transformed) humanity is an eschatological existence, the meaning of which is hinted at—but left without explanation—in the twelfth thesis: ‘The community of faith in the church is the anticipation of and witness to the perfect fulfilment of the fellowship of the triune God with his creation in the Kingdom of God.’¹⁷

E. Conclusion

It is clear that theological anthropology is the point of convergence of the major doctrines of the Christian faith: the triune God, the incarnation, the church and eschatology. Whilst our creation as persons-in-relation, as creatures in the image of God, is an eschatological gift of grace, it is nonetheless visible and a matter of experience in an anticipatory way in the community of the church. In this community, empirically always under the power of sin as well as the force of grace, human existence is re-shaped and re-located. In addition to the lines of intersection already mentioned, there is another: the ethical. Transformation is first a gift of grace, but then becomes an imperative, both within and beyond the church. It means, first, care for the brothers and sisters, the fathers and mothers in the community of faith. Then, far beyond the church, it means involvement in the world of culture and the larger web of relationships between individuals and communities. And last, but not least pressing, it means care for the world of nature, so that we do not plunder and destroy it, but rejoice in it as God’s good creation.¹⁸ Then, by the grace of God, it may be a world in which God, humankind and the wider world of creatures delight.

Christiaan Mostert

¹⁵ Gunton, ‘Human Being as Relational Being’, 157. Gunton acknowledges his debt to Daniel Hardy in the essay referred to in note 3 above.

¹⁶ Gunton, ‘Human Being as Relational Being’, 159.

¹⁷ Gunton, ‘Human Being as Relational Being’, 165.

¹⁸ These last points are referred to in Gunton’s tenth and eleventh theses; ‘Human Being as Relational Being’, 162-164.

The *Imago Dei* in the Lutheran Tradition

Summarising the Lutheran position on the image of God is a difficult task. What follows is not so much a theology of the *imago dei* but an historical sketch of the *imago dei* in Lutheran thought.

Luther on the location and loss of the image of God

Luther is well-known for his view that the image of God was lost in the Fall. It is important, however, what Luther understood to characterise the image of God in humanity. Although not specifically rejecting the traditional Augustinian view that the image of God is borne in the memory, intellect and will of human beings, he does decisively shift the focus to the righteousness of human beings arising out of their relationship to God. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, begun in 1535, Luther took up at length the question of the *imago dei*, defining it as follows:

The image of God is this: that Adam had it in his being and that he not only knew God and believed that He was good, but that he also lived a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without the fear of death or of any other danger, and was content with God's favor (*LW* 1:62f.).

And again, “[the] image of God was something most excellent, in which were included eternal life, everlasting freedom from fear, and everything that is good” (*LW* 1:65).

Luther's difficulty with the traditional location of the *imago dei* in the memory, intellect and will was that if the image was in any sense retained then it would seem that human beings were able to at least cooperate in the matter of their salvation. Medieval advocates of this view of the image of God concluded, argued Luther, “that free will co-operated as the preceding and efficient cause of salvation”. If it is true that even in our fallen state the mind, memory and will remain unimpaired, then, then Luther held that it would follow that by the powers of human nature we could bring about our own salvation (*LW* 1:61).

Luther contended that the image of God, which was chiefly righteousness but extended to all things that are good in the human person, was not just damaged but was lost in the Fall. He cited lust, hatred against God, and blasphemy as “the outstanding moral failings which truly demonstrate that the image of God was lost”. (*LW* 1:63). Yet Luther himself was not rigidly consistent in speaking of the image of God as entirely lost. When comparing humans to the animals, for instance, he talks of the image as having been “almost completely lost” and allows that there still exist great differences between humans and the animals (*LW* 1:67).

For Luther, the loss of the image through human sin also means that we cannot even comprehend or understand fully what it was that we have lost since, even though we retain memory, mind and will, they have been “most seriously weakened” (*LW* 1:61).

The Lutheran Confessions on the loss of the image of God

The Lutheran Confessions follow Luther in locating the image of God in the original righteousness of humankind and holding the image, thus understood, to have been lost. The

Formula of Concord states that the reality of original sin means “the complete lack or absence of the original concreated righteousness of paradise or of the image of God according to which man was originally created in truth, holiness, and righteousness.” Worse still, “original sin in human nature is not only a total lack of good in spiritual, divine things, but ... at the same time it replaces the lost image of God ... with a deep, wicked, abominable, bottomless, inscrutable, and inexpressible corruption of ... [human] nature in all its powers, especially of the highest and foremost powers of the soul in mind, heart and will.” (*Solid Declaration* I.10f).

The argument of the Confessors, and the frequent reference to the mind, heart and will which traditionally were identified with image of God, had much to do with the question of the possibility of human cooperation in the matter of salvation. As the *Formula of Concord* states in the very next article:

We believe that in spiritual and divine things the intellect, heart, and will of unregenerated man cannot by any native or natural powers in any way understand, believe, accept, imagine, will, begin, accomplish, do, effect, or cooperate, but that man is entirely and completely dead and corrupted as far as anything good is concerned. Accordingly we believe that after the Fall and prior to his conversion not a spark of spiritual powers has remained or exists in man by which he could make himself ready for the grace God or ... cooperate toward his conversion by his own powers, either altogether or half-way or in the tiniest or smallest degree (*Solid Declaration* II.7).

Comment on the view Luther and the Confessions

This, in brief, is the position of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. To say the least, it appears a very pessimistic assessment of the image of God in fallen humanity. Three points need to be kept in mind, however, with regard to the Confessional view of the *imago dei*. Firstly, much of the rhetoric concerning the image of God was meant to counter the view that humans can contribute to their salvation and was developed at a time in which this question was heatedly disputed. Secondly, despite the severity of much of the language it is clear that humans do not lose everything good in the fall – only that which is truly good, namely that which counts as righteousness before God. We still have stewardship over the creation, albeit in a weakened and abused form, we still have memory, intellect and will, and we can still perform acts of civil righteousness. Thirdly, for the Christian person the loss of the original image has been supplanted by the much superior image of Christ. Through the cross of Christ God conforms each of God’s elect to the image of Christ (*Solid Declaration* XI.48). Similarly Luther refers to the renewal of the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45) as a reverting of redeemed humanity to the lost image of God. (*LW* 1:65) and in the “Disputation Concerning Man” (1536) speaks of humans as the material for our future form in which the image of God will be “remolded and perfected” (*LW* 34:140).

Image of God in the wider and proper sense

When we read contemporary Lutheran theologians on the *imago dei* it is clear that very many do not restrict it to original righteousness, nor do they speak of it in the past tense as something lost. They also do not see themselves in disagreement with Luther and the Confessions. During the period of Lutheran orthodoxy there was much dispute over Genesis 9:6 “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.” (Cf. James 3:9). It was argued that even after the fall humans bear the image of God in some real sense. The solution adopted by most Lutherans was first put forward by Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688) and Johann Wilhelm Baier (1647-1695). They suggest that there is a distinction between the image of God in the wider sense, in which we can still see humans as bearing the image of God in our distinction from the animals, in our rationality and in other capacities after the Fall, and the image of God in the proper sense, which is the true

knowledge of God or original righteousness, which fallen humanity no longer possesses. In this way it was possible to affirm the essential point that Luther and the Confessions make with regard to the loss of original righteousness but to still speak of fallen humans as bearing in some meaningful sense the image of God.

Conclusion

While contemporary Lutheran theologians vary in their emphases the following points are generally descriptive of the Lutheran view of the image of God.

1. The image of God, which is not distinguished from the likeness of God, in its truest and most proper sense, is understood relationally as humanity's original right relationship with and knowledge of God. This, it is agreed, has been lost.
2. The imprint of the image of God is very broad in scope and one can also appropriately speak of the image of God as being reflected in such things as human freedom, capacity to love, creativity, intellect, etc. While these things have been distorted in fallen humanity they still participate in and reflect the image of God.
3. We cannot speak of the image of God apart from the image of Christ into which God is daily bringing us and re-forming us. The image of God in the sense in which Luther understood it as righteousness before God has been restored to those who are in Christ. (Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24)

Mark Worthing
Introduced by Peter Kriewaldt

A Roman Catholic Paper on the Image of God

This paper follows one strand of Christian anthropology, namely a consideration of human beings created in the image of God. Its approach picks up the general optimism Roman Catholics have about the human condition. While this is just one theme, it is foundational and from it other themes can be developed.

A fundamental biblical text for a Christian anthropology is Genesis 1:26–27 which refers to God’s creation of humankind on the sixth day of creation. God says, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness”. Humans are given dominion over the rest of creation. They are created male and female and told to be fruitful and multiply. The text has been interpreted at various times as referring not simply to the initial act of creation (ie *Adam*), but as a statement about all human beings and their endowments. Accordingly, the most basic affirmation about humankind is that it is in relationship with God. The human being is thus only understood by reference to God.

Theological reflection has considered how the human person is like God. While the distinction between the creator and the creature has never been blurred, the special place of humankind in the creation has been affirmed. Each person is endowed with a God-given capacity to understand, to know, to love, to act in freedom, to be responsible, and to be creative. Each and every human person is made good and is capable of living a good life because they are made after the image of God who is goodness itself. Hence the human person has been described as one who is open to God, capable of God (*capax Dei*). Referring of the image of God found in the human mind Augustine wrote: “... even though the image has become impaired and disfigured by the loss of its participation in God, it remains nonetheless an image of God. For it is his image by the very fact that it is *capable* of him, and can be a *partaker* of him; and it cannot be so great a good except that it is his image.”¹

A distinction has sometimes been made between the image and the likeness. In its most basic form the distinction is between the natural and the supernatural, between nature and grace. It was a distinction which allowed the theologians of the early centuries to develop an anthropology which presented a dynamic rather than a static view of the human person: it allowed them to focus not so much on an ideal moment at the beginning as on the human person in history. For Irenaeus the image is present in the actual creation of each person. It is not a static endowment, but sets the person on the way to growth into the likeness of God. This movement towards the likeness of God happens because of grace. For Irenaeus, the likeness to God is a likeness through the Spirit: “the Spirit nourishes and increases what is made, ... man makes progress day by day and ascends towards the perfect, that is, approximates the uncreated One.”² For Gregory of Nyssa the likeness is the progressive realisation of the image. Hence although there may be a distinction between image and likeness there is also a fundamental connection. Here we see that a Christian anthropology holds nature and grace together in tension.

¹ *De Trinitate*, XIV, 8, 11. Emphasis added.

² *Adv. haer.*, I, 6.

Augustine referred to the image, which was not lost through original sin, becoming more perfectly the image of God. Thus, the image of God is something that is achieved over a lifetime rather than something simply given. He illustrates the point by referring to the image seen in a mirror. At present we see in a mirror dimly, but later we shall see face to face (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). When we see the glory of the Lord, as though reflected in a mirror, we are being transformed into the same image (cf. 2 Cor 3:18). As Paul says, we are being transformed from glory to glory. Augustine, like other writers at this time, interpreted the statement that humankind is made in the image of God as opening up the possibility of transformation throughout human life; indeed, he saw this as a necessary part of the life of humankind. He refers to the text of Paul just mentioned: “he (Paul) added these words ‘from glory to glory’, namely, from the glory of creation to the glory of justification — although the words ‘from glory to glory’ may also be understood in other ways, such as, from the glory of faith to the glory of sight, from the glory by which we are the children of God into the glory by which we shall be like him, since we shall see him just as he is. But when he added ‘as through the Spirit of the Lord’, he shows that the good of so desirable a transformation is conferred upon us by the grace of God”.³

The full meaning of the affirmation that humankind is made in the image of God is grasped by reference to Jesus the Christ. Paul affirms: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15). During the early centuries of the Christian era the accounts of the creation of humankind were frequently read Christologically. For example, Tertullian wrote: “For in all the shape given to the clay, Christ was intended as the man who was to be”.⁴ Likewise, Irenaeus states: “... as the image of God did he make man, and the image is the Son of God in whose image man was made”.⁵ Jesus is thus the fullness of the revelation of God’s purpose and plan for humankind. The transformation that takes place in the human person is therefore a transformation into the image of Christ who as the image of God is at the same time the image of the perfect human being.

Christologically we may speak of Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit with the effect that the unity between the man Jesus and the Logos is created (cf. Lk 1:35; Rom 1:4). Further, a Christology that focuses on the anointing of the man Jesus, endeavouring to give full respect to that humanity, may also say that the image of God (i.e. the divinity) is realised in him over the course of his concrete history. Allowing this Christology to inform our anthropology we are able to note that the image of God is realised in us through a similar anointing of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9–11), which we call grace. Furthermore, the image is realised in us throughout the course of our own concrete life.

In Roman Catholic anthropology the focus is less on the origins of humankind and more on the future of humanity. Thus even in reading the account of the creation of humankind the real concern is eschatological; it is to recognise the future that is offered as a promise of God and in which we already participate. The image of God is therefore not so much something static that is given to us as something that is realised in us throughout our life by the working of the Holy Spirit as we live an authentic human life.

Gerard Kelly

³ *De Trinitate*, XV, 8, 14.

⁴ *De carnis resurr.*, 6.

⁵ *Demonst.*, 22.

The Image of God in Salvationist Thought

Salvationist theology has developed via the Anglican and Wesleyan streams. Its view of man is expressed in its fourth article of faith which states, “*we believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God*”.

In elaborating this position, it is noted that, being made in the image of God implies the capacity for a relationship with God and one another; it implies individuality, autonomy and reason as well as a yearning for spiritual communion with God; it implies a potential for creativity and our ability to appreciate beauty; it is expressed in the working of conscience and the possibility of holiness of character (through God’s sanctifying work). “*Gods’ intention for us all, as created in his image, has been realized in Jesus Christ. In him we see the full human expression of God’s holiness and love. He is the one true image of God, the one through whom we find our hope of fulfilling Gods intention*”.

While the article of faith speaks of the **total depravity** the word **distorted** is more commonly used in these days. “*This does not mean that every person is as bad as he or she can be, but rather that the depravity that sin has produced in human nature extends to the total personality. No area of human nature remains unaffected,...even attempts at righteousness are tainted with sin. Human freedom to respond to God and to make moral choices is therefore impaired*”.

Within Salvation Army thinking remains the understanding that humans must actively participate with God in his saving and sanctifying purposes. Repentance and faith are seen as human acts made possible by the grace of God but which require active human cooperation “*God is constantly at work by his grace to draw all people to himself. And yet response to God’s grace is an act in which we ourselves are involved, in that we have been given free will and we can accept or reject the new life that is offered to us*”.

In taking this view The Salvation Army distances itself from the most extreme of Augustinian and Calvinistic thinking which emphasizes the sovereignty of God and fallenness of man to the exclusion of volitional human response.

T.H.L Parker has written regarding the debate between Augustine and Pelagius, “*in this controversy Augustine was adjudged the winner but the prize was awarded to the compromisers*”. To some extent The Salvation Army would identify itself with the compromisers represented by John Cassian in the early centuries and Arminius at the time of the reformation, who in response to Calvin staunchly argued for the recognition of human capacity to respond to God’s gracious invitation, either in a positive or negative manner. John Wesley clearly belongs to this tradition and it remains a significant part of Salvation Army thought. It is interesting to note the connection between this thought and the Orthodox statements of the Synod of Jerusalem [1672].

All this leads to a fairly high view of the image of God in man, and also a recognition that the distorted image effects our systems as much as it effects individuals. This influences the Army's activist approach to involvement in human need. From its early days Salvation Army thinking recognized that salvation must be experienced as much in this world [and its systems] as in the next. Human kind, though injured and wounded can and should be ministered to and healed. Traditionally this view of humanity has been expressed in song [though this verse is by a non-Salvationist]:

“Down in the human heart,
Crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving hand,
Wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.”
(Fanny Crosby, Salvation Army Song Book 691)

Jim Weymouth & Graham Roberts

Anthropology and the Image of God: A Coptic Orthodox Perspective

St Athanasius the Apostolic and the Incarnation of the Lord

Through the fall of man, the image of God was marred, spoilt. St Athanasius likens the image of God to a **portrait painted on a wooden panel** damaged from without.¹ The artist, in his great love for that masterpiece, does not do away with the painting altogether, but chooses to renew it, even on the same wooden panel. This he does by returning the original in whose image it was made.

This original is analogous to the Second Adam, and it is in this sense that the holy Christ is the image of the Father. In this way, then, we have an Orthodox understanding of: (a) the meaning of the Divine Incarnation; and (b) the nature of man's redemption. Our loving God did not annihilate Adam after he fell, but restored his fallen nature, and thus restored the image of God in him, by coming in his likeness, yet without sin, nor inclination to sin. The Lord restored the 'masterpiece' to its original state and glory, by His salvation, Who is the express image of God ("who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...", Hebrews 1:3).² It can be seen from the above analogy that Christ took the same wooden panel, our humanity, and restored it.

A saying by St. Athanasius is: "For men's mind having finally fallen to things of sense, the Word disguised Himself by appearing in a body, that he might, as Man, transfer men to Himself..."³ We will touch on deification below.

He also says that to recreate man's fallen image, it needed the image of the Father, the Word Himself, to die⁴, since He is the only perfect image.

Human Freedom

Man was totally ruined, not in the sense of being totally evil, but that the image of God was destroyed in him. St. Cyril of Alexandria says that the image of God in which man was created was his own free will, and the spoilage of the human nature that occurred by his disobedience to God was the loss of his free will. Through the redemption, we are now free in Christ (John 8:36; Galatians 5:1).

A quick look at the Old Testament is enough to show that God still had witnesses, prophets, those that were walking in His way, upright, etc. But while they all awaited the hope of salvation, their knowledge of God was still obscured. Some examples follow:

¹ *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 14

² All scriptural quotes in this paper are from NKJV, unless otherwise stated.

³ *Incarnation*, 16.1.

⁴ *Incarnation*, 13.7.

- ❖ their faith in Hebrews 11. For instance, v.13: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”;
- ❖ “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56);
- ❖ “‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’. And he was called the friend of God” (James 2:23);
- ❖ “So the Lord said to Moses: ‘See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh’” (Exodus 7:1);
- ❖ “‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will’” (‘...carry out all my wishes’ [NRSV]) (Acts 13:22);
- ❖ “As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated’” (Romans 9:13).

Could God have spoken about such people in this way, if they had been totally wicked, or did not show traces of the image of God? Also, why the incarnation and redemption if man did not possess some form of spirituality, albeit fallen? God would not have bothered, if man were a totally destroyed and evil creature. It is fair to say that the people of the OT saw only glimpses of God in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2), the “back” of God (Exodus 33:23), etc., but the fullness of God was seen and known in Christ Jesus.

But what fell?

All of man: body, soul, mind, will, etc. – physically, psychosomatically and spiritually. Indeed, whatever was incarnate needed salvation, so the Word was incarnate and assumed or took human body, human soul and human spirit. St. Philoxenos of Mabbogh says: “The complete man was redeemed in God. Since the whole of Adam had come under the curse and been deprived, the whole of him was taken by God and renewed”.⁵

‘Deification’: within Orthodoxy

This could best be explained in the verse: “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption...” (2 Peter 1:4). This verse does not mean that we become like God in His divine nature or His essence, but that we become adopted children of God. It is a process by which a Christian becomes more like God, and is begun when we are joined to Christ through faith in Holy Baptism. Indeed, it is an honour to be considered children of God. 2 Peter 1:4 obviously does not mean that we are God, but St. Peter uses “partakers”, as we may say “fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit” (Philippians 2:1 and 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3 – trinitarian fellowship; 2 Corinthians 13:14). We “are gods” (John 10:34) in that we bear His image, not His nature. Hence, we are able to participate in God’s glory, love, virtue, etc.

In this sense, St. Paul the Apostle says: “For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: **I will dwell in them** and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Corinthians 6:16; see also Leviticus 26:12).

Image and Likeness

Some Fathers of the Church make a distinction between image and likeness, in the sense that image is common to all men, whereas likeness is related to growth in Christ, or a fuller image.

And finally, some well known verses to contemplate

- ❖ “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29);

⁵ *Epistle to the Monks of Senoun*

- ❖ “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1 Corinthians 15:49);
- ❖ “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Colossians 1:15)”
- ❖ “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Colossians 3:9-10).

Sobhi Attia

Christian Theological Anthropology Towards an Australian Quaker View of Human Nature

Creation in the Image of God

Early Friends thought of the nature of humankind through their own awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit working with their spirits to transform them by the renewing of their minds, forming in them the mind of *Christ*. Their experience of Christ was of “the light that enlightens every human being” (John 1:9). They conceived “that of God in everyone” variously as the Seed¹, the Light of Christ within, the God-given capacity to respond to God, to God’s grace and transforming love. These capacities were understood to be from Christ, the Christ portrayed in the writings of Paul and John.

The Condition of Humans in the Fall

The divine Seed was opposed by an evil seed. A choice between these two seeds could lead to reconciliation with God or to estrangement from God: “For all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief as I had been”. (George Fox)

“All Adam’s posterity, or mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, as to the first Adam, or earthly man, is fallen, degenerate, and dead. They are deprived of sensing or feeling the inward testimony or seed of God (cf. Romans 5: 12, 15). They are subject instead to the seed of the serpent, sown in men’s hearts while they remain in this natural and corrupted state. Not only their words and deeds, but their imaginations are evil in the sight of God while they remain in this state. In this state man can know nothing correctly. Even his thoughts of God and spiritual matters are unprofitable to himself and others until he has been disjoined from this evil seed and has been united to the Divine Light. However, we do not impute the evil seed to infants until they have actually been joined to it by their own transgression. All of us are by nature ‘the children of wrath’” (George Fox). “We all lived our lives in sensuality, and obeyed the promptings of our own instincts and notions. In our natural condition, we like the rest, lay under the dreadful judgement of God. But God, rich in mercy, for the great love he bore us, brought us to life with Christ even when we were dead in our sins; it is by his grace you are saved” (Ephesians 2: 3-5).

Adam and Eve fell “from the purity, holiness, innocency, pure and good estate in which God had placed them. So Adam died, and Eve died: and all died – in Adam”. Through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, all persons lost their “original righteousness”. Sin is “going out from the Truth”, turning from “inward unity with God” to follow the evil seed to false gods in idolatry which becomes the state of sin. Of the loss of all or part of the image and likeness of God, Isaac Pennington wrote: “Men speak of the relics of the image which the first man had: Ah! Poor deceived hearts! What relics of life are there in a dead man? What relics of purity in a man wholly degenerated and corrupted? Nay, nay; the spiritual, the divine image, the eternal life, the pure power and virtue is wholly lost; and there is nothing left.” Of sinful human nature: “the earth is not so much as prepared to receive the seed, until the Lord sends his plough in the heart”. Early Friends took universal sin seriously both as a state of human nature and as acts of disobedience. They differed whether sinfulness could be attributed to infants before they had actually disobeyed.

¹ ‘Seed’ suggests residue of divine image.

The founders of the main 19th century Quaker divisions agreed on this.

John Gurney held: “Every human being has this *freedom of will*, with a sufficiency of light and power to direct its operations; but this powerful light is not inherent in any man’s nature, but is graciously *bestowed by him who is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh in the world*”.

Elias Hicks: “For although a man in his fallen state may do a moral act, that is in itself a right work, yet doing it for his own pleasure and will, and not because it is agreeable to the will and pleasure of the Creator, it cannot be accepted as a good act, because the motive and principle were evil, being selfish and not of God”. In the 20th century, “man, *qua* man, is a sinner, even in his virtue” (Trueblood). “Man is depraved, ...cannot of his own power or inclination find salvation” (Arthur Roberts). He is optimistic, not about humans but about the power of Christ to save a human.

Douglas Steere contrasts Plato: “matter keeps mind in darkness” with Augustine commenting on Jesus’ invective against pride, selfishness, hardness of heart and self-righteousness, the hereditary defiance of God called ‘original sin’ (Of sin in society).

Cecil Hinshaw: “even good men are caught up in the magnetism of corporate sin”.

Kenneth Boulding: “only small organisations can be personal”.

Universal Redemption by Christ and the Saving and Spiritual Light by which every Person is Enlightened

Robert Barclay, (Propositions 5 & 6): “God, out of his infinite love, takes ‘no pleasure in the death of the wicked man’ (Ezekiel 18:32, 33:11), but God has given his only Son, that whoever ‘has a faith in him may not die but have eternal life’ (John 3:16). He is ‘the real light which enlightens every human’ (John 1:9)...makes visible everything that is exposed to the light, teaches all temperance, righteousness, and godliness and enlightens the hearts of all, reprovng sin to prepare them for salvation. This light, no less universal than the seed of sin. If not resisted, would effect the salvation of all, being purchased by his death who tasted death for everyone: ‘For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made to live’ (1 Corinthians 15:22). In this hypothesis, all of the objections to the universality of Christ’s saving death are easily resolved.

“...Just as many of the ancient philosophers may have been saved, so may some of those today whom providence has placed in the remote parts of the world where the knowledge of this history is lacking, be made partakers of the divine mystery if they do not resist the manifestation of grace which is given to everyone for their benefit (1 Corinthians 12:7). There is an evangelical and saving light and grace in everyone, and the love and mercy of God toward mankind were universal, both in the death of his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the light in the heart. Therefore, Christ has tasted death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9) – not merely for all kinds of persons, but for everyone of every kind. The benefit of his suffering is extended not only to those who have a well-defined outward knowledge of his death and sufferings, as these are declared in the scriptures, but even to those who by some unavoidable accident were excluded from the benefit of this knowledge”.

Salvation, Justification, Sanctification, Perfection, Perseverance

Justification is not authentic without sanctification, holy obedience to God and unity with God, living as if the kingdom of God is already present. For those who do not resist the light, but receive it, it becomes a holy, pure and spiritual birth in them. It produces holiness, righteousness, purity, and all those other blessed fruits that are acceptable to God. Jesus Christ is formed in us by this holy birth and by it he does his work in us. By it we are sanctified and

we are justified in the sight of God. Paul as said: “But you have been through the purifying waters; you have been dedicated to God and justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians. 6:11). It is not by works produced by our own wills, or by good works themselves, but by Christ, who is not only the gift and the giver, but he cause which produces these effects in us. While we were still enemies, he saved us and justified us in this way. Titus 3:5 says: “He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit”.

George Fox: “For I say that Christ died for all men, and was propitiation for all, and had enlightened all men and women with his divine and saving light and that none could be true believers but who believed in it”.

Barclay: “This light is no less universal than the seed of sin, being purchased by his death who tasted death for everyone: ‘For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made to live’ (1 Corinthians 15:22)”.

Gurney : “Between...the declaration of Paul, that Christ gave himself ‘a ransom for all’ and that of John, that ‘he lighteth every man that cometh into the world’, there is surely a most satisfactory and delightful concordance”.

Elias Hicks stresses inward redemptive work of Christ, disengaging Light within from historical Christ. Some saw Light as natural endowment without transcendent referent tended toward humanistic understanding of self, alien to Quaker reliance on power of Lord to overcome sin.

Cooper: “Our common need for reconciliation entails the integration of our wills with God’s will, thus fulfilling our search for spiritual integrity, in holy obedience, revolutionary faithfulness”.

Penington : “Is it not the will of Christ that his disciples should be perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect?” Women and men created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26), marred in some sense by disobedience at the Fall, leaves humans with a sense of right and wrong, a rational capacity which may not be reliable and a desire to be restored to their supposed relationship with their Creator.

Barclay (Proposition 8): “He in whom this pure & holy birth occurs in all its fullness, finds that death and sin are crucified and removed from him, and his heart becomes united and obedient to truth. He is no longer able to obey any suggestions or temptations toward evil, but is freed from sin and the transgression of the law of God, and in that respect perfect”.

Yet there is still some possibility of spiritual growth, and some possibility of sinning remains if the mind is not diligently and watchfully applied to heeding the Lord. (Romans 6:14; 8:13; 6:2, 18; and 1 John 3:6).

We do believe, that to those in whom Christ comes to be formed, and the new man brought forth, and born of the incorruptible seed, as that birth, and man in union therewith, naturally doth the will of God, it is possible so far to keep to it, as not to be found daily transgressors of the law of God”. “I will not affirm that a state is not attainable in this life, in which to de righteousness may be so natural to the regenerate soul, that in the stability of that condition he cannot sin. “Inward grace of Go suffices to bring about salvation. In this life it is possible to achieve such increase and stability in the truth as to make total apostasy impossible.

Testimonies Express Concern for Perfection

The Peace Testimony arises from concern for the damage done to the victor as much as the harm done to the vanquished. The initial “opening” (revelation) to George Fox, not to fight, involved the “lusts” at the root of wars. It was readily supported from scripture. War was inconsistent with the way of the cross. It did violence to the soldier’s soul. It could destroy another in whom

one should answer that of God and for whom Christ died. The testimony to equality works against violence between the sexes and towards equality of the sexes in the meeting.

William Jaggs

Study on Anthropology: Christian feminist perspectives

Feminist theology begins with a critique of the androcentric¹ bias of existing Christian theologies. This bias is the view that the male sex is primary and the female secondary. Historically changing paradigms of gender based theological perspectives can be traced from the Jesus movement,² through patristic and mediaeval developments³ to the present. Reading with a “hermeneutic of suspicion” which assumes an androcentric bias in the documents, feminist theologians have articulated ongoing struggles within Christian theology over the significance of gender. Beginning with the key text from Paul’s letter to the Galatians:

As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothes yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.
(Gal.3.27-28 NRSV)

Feminist theology understands this as a transformation that takes place in baptism. The believer transcends ethnic origins, social status and gender to assume a new and common identity within one people, those who are “in Christ Jesus”. The statement that “there is no longer male and female” can be argued to be an original baptismal formula, to which the other statements were added as the early church expanded into the Greco-Roman world. Echoing the first account of creation:

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.
(Gen.1.27 NRSV)

the statement can be interpreted as a “commentary on and eschatological reversal of the development of the biological pair in creation”.⁴

A key question raised by feminist theology asks, if women are equally redeemed by Christ why has theology created, supported and reinforced androcentric sexism in society and the church? Extensive scholarship demonstrates the diversity of theological developments in early Christianity as it moved into new geographical areas and encountered cultures other than Palestinian Judaism. Conflicting and competing views of the goodness of creation, the origins of evil and the composition of the human person as both body and spirit or soul also shaped

¹ The term was introduced by Lester F Ward in *Pure Sociology* (1903) and has been widely used by feminists to describe bias towards the male in all areas of cultural, religious, political and domestic life. See Lisa Tuttle, *Encyclopaedia of Feminism* (London: Arrow Books, 1986), 19.

² For a study of the history of women in the Jesus movement as a praxis of liberation from patriarchal structures see, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1983)

³ These are key periods in the development of theological positions reinforcing the inequality of women. Mediaeval developments remain, even today, influential shapers of popular piety. See Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Religion and Sexism. Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974)

⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption. A Theological History*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 23.

attitudes to women. Despite a body-affirming view of creation both Greek and Latin Christianity committed to a view of redemption as a rejection of the body and an asceticism of renunciation of the material world. This involved a rejection of sensuality, and even more critically for women, of the expression of sexuality. Early asceticism identified women with the sensual and sexual and accorded them status only if they embraced celibacy.

Patristic theology assimilated male-female dualism with body-soul dualism to the detriment of a wholistic Christian anthropology. Woman was held to be subordinate to man in the order of nature and also in the disorder of sin. However, this order becomes reversed. As Augustine exemplifies, the Fathers slip into attributing women's inferiority to Eve's cause of the Fall. While Augustine is willing to concede that Eve could not have done this alone unless Adam, the natural "ruler" had agreed, Tertullian voices the nadir of this position in calling Eve (and by implication all women) "the devil's gateway... she who persuaded him [Adam] whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack".⁵

Medieval developments include, most critically, Thomas Aquinas' introduction of faulty Aristotelian biology to Christian anthropology. Aquinas asserted that "woman was misbegotten male" defective in nature and unfit matter to receive a full sacramental life in the church.⁶ While it is true that, with Augustine, Aquinas held that woman has an asexual soul capable of relating to God, that relationship is expressed through an inferior female body and intellect. This theological anthropology leads to the assertion of women's equality as made in God's image, yet women's inequality as made subject to men by procreation.

Feminist theologies define the human self, male and female, through its primary identity as image of God. Developed within a focus on a this-worldly transformation of unjust relations, feminist theologies view gender as central to a multi layered structure of patriarchy which includes class distinctions, racial discrimination and clericalism, and which extends to the exploitation of the natural world. Feminist critique of traditional Christian paradigms has implications for Christology and soteriology.

Colleen O'Reilly

⁵ For an extensive discussion of these developments see Ruether, ed. *Religion and Sexism*, pp.150-183.

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* ST I,92 "Woman is said to be misbegotten male, as being a product outside the purpose of nature considered in the individual case: but not against the purpose of universal nature." Quoted in Ruether, ed. *Religion and Sexism*, p.260, and see also pp.213-266.

Theological anthropology: a embodied gender perspective

In considering an ecumenical approach to theological anthropology, one useful viewpoint is that of taking seriously our embodiment as men and women. Such an approach has been undertaken occasionally (for example, the ARC USA document on ‘The Image of God’) but this paper seeks to explore it from a more explicitly gendered perspective.⁷

Being made male and female corporately, woman or man personally, is a basic reality of what it means to be human. As the Bible’s opening chapter puts it, gender is an intrinsic dimension of being made in the image of God. But what this means is not easily discerned! I was once involved in workshops with some young adults. The women were asked to talk among themselves about what they would dislike and enjoy if they were men; the men are asked to think similarly about life as women. Each group listened to what the other group reported, then met separately once more, before an open discussion about living as men and women. The outcomes, though no doubt influenced by participants’ social formation, offered me a starting point for reflection. The men saw the most positive thing about being a woman as living close to one’s body, a sense of ‘connectedness’, which the women agreed with strongly. What the men would *not* like about being women, however, was menstruating. This amazed most of the women, but opened up significant discussion.

The blood of life

Blood is a vital symbol of life and death, sharpened today by the AIDS scourge. We all bleed, but the menstrual cycle is distinctive to women, who experience blood as a regular part of life. For most men, on the other hand, bleeding is an abnormal experience, encountered only in abattoirs or the battle-field, in brawls or road trauma. How do gender perceptions shape our response to the centrality of the life-giving blood of Christ in Christian faith? Do women and men respond differently to receiving the communion cup – “the blood of Christ keep you in eternal life”? Such questions begin to engage us with sexuality in deeply personal ways, which can assist us in ecclesial reflection on theological anthropology.

For much of her life-span a woman’s body prepares each month to conceive and bear a child (whether she is a mother or not). The menstrual period is a constant reminder to each woman that she is embodied, and must deal monthly with ‘bloody reality’, as Erin White writes:

Whether I am fifteen or fifty, everybody and everything can be affected because my body does this strange thing every month, thwarting my desires, and upsetting my relationships. I am no longer in control.⁸

Yet this experience is also to be celebrated. Noting that the menstrual and lunar cycles are similar, White goes on to say, “I feel linked with the moon and the tides ... my body pulses in rhythm with nature”.

⁷ Much of this paper reworks material from my *The Doctrine of Humanity* (Nottingham / Deerfield Illinois: IVP, 1996) especially chapters 8 and 9.

⁸ Erin White & Marie Tulip, *Knowing Otherwise: Feminism, Women and Religion* (Melbourne: David Lovell, 1991) 36.

Some, however, see menstrual periods as denied or ridiculed in the Christian tradition. Blood, it is argued, is there linked with the forgiveness of sins through a man's bloody death, notably in baptism and eucharist, symbolic representations of being 'washed in the blood' and drinking 'the blood of Christ'. Women need a man's blood to save them, while symbolic celebration of women's blood though which life is given goes unrecognised. A more sympathetic analysis notes the close links between birth and baptism: the bloody dangers of passing through the waters of birth are sensed by many women as symbolically related to the death to sin represented in baptism. Such an instinct points to a profound truth, that creation and redemption are not isolated, but connected.⁹

In the scriptures menstruation is discussed realistically, never lightly or flippantly. Leviticus 15:19-24 requires the 'purification' of a woman for the week following the onset of her menstrual period. She herself, with anything on which she lies or sits, anyone who touches these, and any man who has intercourse with her, are 'unclean'.¹⁰ In English 'unclean' carries connotations of moral or social disgrace, but in ancient Israel this was not the case. The 'clean / unclean' distinction was more akin to what might be termed 'regular / less regular' states of life (or 'normal / non-normal, as Mary Douglas puts it).¹¹ Menstruation is accepted as part of a woman's life, but different to the times when she is not menstruating.

By the time of Jesus, 'unclean' carried strong connotations of being a social outcast, with an implied sense of excommunication, and so unholiness. But the 'clean / unclean' pairing is quite different from the 'holy / profane' contrast, which has to do with relationship with God. In Israelite society, things were normally 'clean', and could be set aside as 'holy' by the process of sanctification. Similarly, something or someone 'unclean' could be 'cleansed', and so return to its regular state. To be 'unclean' was not the same as being 'profane', though what was 'unclean' was not to come into contact with the 'holy', nor was the 'profane' to come in contact with the 'clean' (cf Leviticus 18, Numbers 4). Menstruating women were thus not 'impure', 'profane' or 'unholy', merely not in their 'regular' state of life. And no sanction is involved with menstruation: a woman is cleansed merely by washing.

The divisions between clean and unclean, holy and profane, were removed in the early churches. Their abolition did not come about easily, but entailed much internal conflict, seen vividly in Peter's twice-told dream about clean and unclean foods (Acts 10:9-16; 11:5-10). Paul's teaching, 'in Christ there is neither male nor female' (Gal 3:28) rejects any denigration of woman due to (mis)application of the scriptural traditions touching uncleanness. Jesus' healing of the woman with a discharge of blood is particularly significant (Luke 8:43-49 is the fullest account). Her touching his garments technically rendered them, and so Jesus, 'unclean', but he shows no concern at this. Rather, Jesus affirms her faith, a faith reflected both in her healing, and in her inner awareness of it. Further, her bold act may have prompted Jesus to take the initiative just minutes later to touch Jairus' dead daughter. As Erin White writes, 'this girl was ritually unclean on two counts, being dead and being of such an age that she had just begun or

⁹ Though the biblical requirement for rites of purification and redemption associated with birth was lifted in Christ, the anthropological realities underlying them remains. More reflection on these issues is needed, especially being aware of the post-Christendom context in which we live in Australian cities. Again, while the death of Jesus, rather than his birth, is the means of our 'redemption through his blood' (Rom. 3:23-26; Eph. 1:7), in the 'Song of the Church' (*Te Deum*) we acknowledge that Christ "did not disdain the virgin's womb".

¹⁰ So David not only stole Uriah's wife, he breached the biblical proscription against a man having intercourse with a woman during menstruation (Lev 18:19), and rendered himself unclean (Lev 15:24). That Bathsheba conceives, even though David's initial sexual relations with her occurred during her purification, means that sexual relations continued between them for some time after the initial contact: it was more than a casual affair.

¹¹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) 35-40 ('clean') and 51-54 ('holy'); cf G. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Eerdmans, 1979) 19ff. Note the importance of language here in constructing the world of meaning: the same is true when it comes to terms such as masculine, gender and nature.

was just about to begin menstruating ... Jesus' touch is therefore highly significant'.¹² It embodies God's affirmation of woman in every aspect of her embodied life.

The blood of covenant

Women's life-experience thus embraces the realities of birth and death embodied by blood. What then of being a man? If 'connectedness' describes woman's experience of embodiment, then 'externally focused' describes man's, symbolised in the externality of male genitalia. Here it is essential to note that the penis is made to *connect with* one who is 'other', so that the two become 'one flesh'. 'Connectedness' can thus be seen to be true of men and women alike, but in very different ways. As Genesis puts it, the man 'leaves' in order to 'cleave', pointing to the male search for identity in communion with one beyond himself.

Male self-understanding, however, often focusses on the *phallus* as the symbol of power and identity. (The Latin term *phallus* is used to speak of the symbolic sense of the medical term, *penis*). It is commonly seen as *the* symbol of all that is domineering or invasive: not only war and rape, but the phallic associations given to swords, rifles, motor-cycles, or even factory chimneys, viewed as symbols of the rape of the earth. Phallic symbolism is closely associated with fertility religion in the scriptures. Israel was to cut down the 'sacred poles' ('*asherim*) of Canaan, and strong sanctions were set in place against their erection (cf Ex. 34:13, Dt. 12:3, 16:21-22). The scriptures use phallic imagery, but in anti-phallic ways, repudiating fertility-based religion, whether understood in 'masculine' or 'feminine' terms: idolising womb or phallus was utterly rejected in Israel.

Perhaps the most striking example of phallic symbolism is circumcision. Abraham is commanded to circumcise all the males of his clan, as the sign of God's covenant made (literally 'cut') with him and his descendants (Gen. 17:9-14). Phallic blood is shed as the symbol of belonging to the covenant people of God. This radically questions the notion that men are to find their identity in the power in the penis. Similarly, the prophets appeal for Israel, 'uncircumcised in heart' (Jer 9.26) to 'remove the foreskins of your hearts' (Jer. 4:4). Luke recounts that Christ's blood was first shed in his being circumcised on the eighth day (Lk. 2:21). Further, his being 'circumcised in heart' was evident in his full submission to the will of God, climaxed in his 'circumcision' on the cross, where his blood was shed so that all believers may receive 'spiritual circumcision' (Col. 2:11-12).

The requirement of circumcision for entry to God's people was hotly debated in the early church (see Acts 15, Gal. 2:1-14; 5:2-12). Though clearly commanded in the scriptures, it formed a barrier between Jewish (circumcised) male believers on the one hand, and Gentile (uncircumcised) male believers and all female believers on the other. Its replacement by baptism opened the covenant not only to Gentiles, but to women and men alike (cf Col 2:12-13, Rom. 4:1-12, Gal. 3:28). In Christ, circumcision is not 'external and physical', but 'a matter of the heart' (Rom. 2:28-29). In time, circumcision ceased to function as an effective symbol for Christians. Nevertheless, its radical undermining of phallic symbolism remains. On the one hand, circumcision ritualizes the rejection of male superiority, in symbolically shedding phallic blood. On the other hand, the rejection of circumcision as a pre-requisite for belonging to the people of God repudiates all claims to male spiritual superiority. A living relationship with God does not depend on gender: every barrier is removed by the shed blood of Christ, a reconciliation made visible in Christian baptism, our 'spiritual circumcision' (Col. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:13).

¹² *Knowing Otherwise*, 53. A similar learning of Jesus from a woman is possible in the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite (viz. gentile) woman from Tyre and Sidon, who may well have been the human means of opening Jesus' eyes to a mission wider than that to the house of Israel (Mt. 15:21-28).

Let me conclude this brief paper with two general points.

First, the Christian tradition refuses to ascribe to any factor in life the all-encompassing integrative power which Freud, Lawrence and many others give to sexuality. Human beings, made in the image of God, are too complex for such reductionism. In the scriptures, sexual relations are celebrated in poetry (especially the Song of Songs), and used to describe the relation between God and human beings (cf Hosea 1-2, Ezekiel 16, 20, 23). Conversely, the power of sexuality to destroy human life is acknowledged in the stories of people such as Dinah and Shechem, Delilah and Samson, Amnon and Tamar (Gen. 34:1-3, Judges 14-16, 2 Samuel 14). To paraphrase our Lord, “one does not live by sex alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”.

Secondly and finally, any Christian discussion of human sexuality – for all its recognition of the real possibilities of its corruption – must today emphasise that our embodiment as woman or man, replete with genitalia, arousable senses and reproductive potential, is in and of itself good. It is good to be a woman. It is good to be a man. It is good that in Christ we can live together in holiness. And it does untold damage to deny these truths.

Charles Sherlock