

# Learning from Modern European Secularism: A View from the Third World Church

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## SUMMARY

The European legacy to the rest of the world has been both freeing and properly Christian and less desirable. It has valued the variety of tongues and cultures and provided a home for dissent of many types. With secularism there also came liberation from oppression. Christian accounts of social and political change can

be too idealist. Christianity is about action and involvement. The political struggles for human rights are caused by a belief that the image of God in all needs to be affirmed with action. Life has priority over belief. With reference to Bonhoeffer and Havel, the author argues that Theology needs to be taken out of the classroom where it is too often of a Western or conversely an 'indigenous' stamp.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Erbe Europas hat sich in der Welt sowohl befreiend und genuin christlich als auch weniger erstrebenswert ausgewirkt. Es bedeutete Wertschätzung der Vielfalt der Sprachen und Kulturen und Heimatgebung für vielerlei Formen von Abweichungen von der Mehrheit. Mit der Säkularisierung ging auch Befreiung von Unterdrückung einher. Christliche Darstellungen von sozialer und politischer Veränderung können zu idealistisch sein.

Im Christentum geht es um Aktion und Einmischung. Die politischen Kämpfe für Menschenrechte sind von dem Glauben angestoßen, dass das Bild Gottes in allen Menschen durch praktisches Handeln bestätigt werden muss. Leben hat Priorität über Glauben. Unter Bezugnahme auf Bonhoeffer und Havel argumentiert der Autor, dass die Theologie aus dem Klassenzimmer heraus muss, da sie dort zu oft entweder eine westliche oder umgekehrt eine „einheimische“ Prägung hat.

## RÉSUMÉ

L'Europe a apporté au reste du monde à la fois des éléments libérateurs et authentiquement chrétiens, et d'autres moins désirables. Elle nous a appris à apprécier la richesse que constitue la diversité des langues et des cultures, mais a aussi fourni un cadre pour des points de vues divergents de toutes sortes. La sécularisation a apporté la libération de l'oppression. Les récits de changements sociaux et politiques émanant des

chrétiens peuvent être parfois trop idéalisés. Le christianisme implique action et engagement. Les combats politiques pour défendre les droits de l'homme découlent de l'idée que la foi en la création de l'homme comme image de Dieu a des implications pour tous les hommes. La vie est prioritaire sur la croyance. S'appuyant sur Dietrich Bonhoeffer et Vaclav Havel, l'auteur soutient que la théologie doit sortir de la salle de classe où elle a trop souvent un cachet occidental, ou bien, au contraire, une coloration trop «indigène».

“A jerking pop star was wielding his guitar as the credits rolled, his parodic sexual gyrations so grotesque that it was difficult to see that even the besotted young could find them erotic. Switch-

ing off [the TV], Dalglish looked up at the oil portrait of his maternal grandfather, the Victorian bishop. . . He had an impulse to say, ‘This is the music of 1988; these are our heroes; that building



on the headland [a nuclear power station] is our architecture and I dare not stop my car to help children home because they've been taught with good reason that a strange man might abduct and rape them'.<sup>1</sup>

This is a scene out of Britain in the 1980s. But it could also describe scores of cities around the world. The inane cult of celebrity is propagated by the global media; and sophisticated Hi-tech status symbols are found alongside child abuse and other forms of sexual violence in some of the poorest countries of the world, no less than in the rich. Many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America have experienced social, economic, political and cultural transformations in the past fifty years that took several centuries to unravel in Western Europe. While the contours of modernization vary significantly from place to place, there seems to be a long-term convergence of interests and concerns that cuts across cultural and national boundaries.

What has driven this process forward in the first instance is modern science and technology, whose ability to create material wealth and weapons of war is so great that virtually all societies must come to terms with it. The technology of semiconductors or biotechnology is not different for Arabs or Chinese than it is for Westerners, and the need to master it and foster economic growth necessitates the adoption of certain economic and social institutions, like markets and a technocratic bureaucracy. The processes that once defined early modern Europe – the dismantling of traditional sources of authority (especially a professional religious clergy); the differentiation of state, economy and civil society; the breakup of self-enclosed systems of belief; the creation of knowledge elites; and increasingly volatile patterns of cultural contact under conditions of unequal political and economic power – now are characteristic features of Third World societies.

In the conclusion to his *The Wretched of the Earth* forty years ago, Frantz Fanon thundered, "Let us decide not to imitate Europe; let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction. . . . Let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating States, institutions, and societies which draw their inspiration from her."<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the decolonized, post-communist world is, more than ever, an Europeanized one. Wherever the anti-colonial project has tried to isolate itself completely from European ideas and institutions (as in Cambodia or Burma, to take two examples from recent Asian history), the results have been tragic for its own

people. Fanon's Afrocentricity was a mirror-image of the worst forms of colonial Eurocentricity. But "Europe" is not a simple thing, any more than is "Africa"; in the last century it has spawned both universalism and relativism, humanism and chauvinist nationalism, tolerance and genocide. There is the Europe of massive cruelty, and also the Europe "with the capacity to step outside its exclusivity, to question itself, to see itself through the eyes of others."<sup>3</sup> Cultural essentialism is a myth, but it is a myth that dies hard. Which Europe prevails, under current globalising conditions, will have profound consequences for which Africa (and which Asia and which Latin America) emerge in the twenty-first century.

### Recovering a Heritage

That postcolonial guilt should have infected large sections of the Western European church is understandable. So was the retreat of the older denominational churches in Asia, in the decades immediately following independence from colonial rule, from evangelistic proclamation and a visible socio-political presence in favour of inter-religious collaboration in community-development projects. Many who had become "Christians" for the sake of entry into mission schools or government jobs in colonial times now reverted to their ancestral faiths. These faiths, in turn, became radically politicised, carriers of the new nationalist sentiment. This is a story that is still unfolding in several Asian states, though the influence of such religious nationalisms is dissipating in the wake of their inability to deliver their early promises.

However, there were also some positive dimensions to Europe's involvement with Asia and Africa – particularly through the Christian missionary movement – that need to be recovered and told to a wider audience. Neither the Church nor the academy can ignore the historical effects and implications of the missionary movement for the postcolonial world. "It is remarkable," observes Andrew Walls, "that the immense Christian presence in Africa is so little a feature of modern African studies, and how much of the scholarly attention devoted to it is concentrated on manifestations that in Western terms seem most exotic."<sup>4</sup>

The work of the West African scholar Lamin Sanneh has demonstrated how the Protestant missionary strategy of Bible translation into the vernacular tongues of obscure tribes, based on the belief that God participated in our languages and



cultures, served to protect those tribes and languages from suppression by dominant indigenous cultures and to draw them into the mainstream of historical action.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, contrary to popular anti-Christian propaganda, most missionaries (Roman Catholic and Protestant) have defended and protected native interests against the colonial merchants, mercenaries and administrators. In some of the most significant instances, Sanneh notes, Africans came to their sense of cultural self-awareness through the grammars, dictionaries, and the vernacular literacy of Christian missions. This had momentous social, cultural and political consequences.

Despite its tragically blemished history, time after time the Church has stood out in all cultures as the pioneer in initiatives to provide health care to the poor, bring aid to the imprisoned, the homeless and the dying, and to improve conditions of physical labour. Let us take India, for example. Christians have long been in the forefront of movements for the emancipation of women. From the time of Bartholomew Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) and the early Tranquebar mission onward, European and American missionaries gave the lead in education for girls and dalits where the colonial government was hesitant to tread for fear of upsetting local sensibilities. Some of the finest medical hospitals and training schools in India owe their existence to Christian missions. In areas such as leprosy, tuberculosis, mental illness and eye diseases, Christian missionary doctors and nurses pioneered new methods of management and surgery. Moreover, the training of women doctors and nurses was first introduced into India by Christian missionaries. For many years the entire nursing profession was filled with Indian Christians, as other communities regarded nursing as menial work and only fit for uneducated girls and widows. It has been estimated that, as late as the beginning of the Second World War, ninety percent of all the nurses in the country, male and female, were Christians, and that about eighty percent of these had been trained in mission hospitals.<sup>6</sup>

The pioneer evangelical missionaries in Asia were often from the lower middle-classes; as the nineteenth century unfolded and early colonialism gave way to the imperial enterprise on the part of the British, they were replaced by university graduates whose identification of Christianity with Western civilization and the “white man’s burden” provoked anti-missionary stridency among the national elites. Christian missions in India are

routinely dismissed in contemporary Indian scholarship as simply an adjunct to colonialism. But, in fact, they were the soil from which both modern Hindu reform movements and Indian nationalism sprang. Most of the Indian intellectual and political leadership of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century emerged from Christian schools and colleges. Gandhi may have claimed to have been nurtured in the spiritual atmosphere of the Bhagavad Gita, but it was not from this text that he derived his philosophy of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *satyagraha* (“truth-force”). One of the deepest intellectual influences on Gandhi was the Sermon on the Mount as mediated through the works of Tolstoy.

There are, of course, several ironies in this story of Christian mission. Firstly, indigenous cultural and religious renewal, the transmission of scientific and secular political ideals from Europe to the rest of the world via Christian schools and universities, and the arrogant posture of cultural superiority conveyed by some of the later European missionaries and administrators—all these served, in the long term, to undermine the plausibility of Christian preaching. For now there were viable alternatives to the Christianity of the West.

Secondly, the Christian attitude to local language and culture (paradoxically denying their intrinsic sacrality while elevating them to vehicles of divine communication) stood in marked contradiction to Muslim and Hindu notions of eternal, divine tongues (Arabic and Sanskrit respectively) and of a religious homeland. Christian missions in this regard had a powerful *secularizing* thrust. Thirdly, under colonialism the exercise of government was removed from any religious support, something that the citizens of Christendom would not have comprehended. “Consequently, we could say the Christian missionary movement was the funeral of the great myth of Christendom, because mission took abroad the successful separation of Church and State, of religion and territoriality. . . . The missionary movement proved that religion could be separated from its Western territorial identity and succeed, if not in the hearts of the transmitters, in those of the receivers.”<sup>7</sup>

European Christians are no strangers to such ironies. Indeed, modern secular culture represents the rejection of Christianity on the basis of Christian social and cultural achievements. Henrikus Berkhof noted that “Secularization is a child of the gospel, but a child who sooner or later rises against his mother.”<sup>8</sup> The very notion of the “sec-



ular", it has often been pointed out, originated in Christendom. The opposite of "secular" is not the spiritual or the sacred, but the eternal. It is the temporal order that, while incapable of itself to deliver the kingdom of God, is hallowed by creation and incarnation and called to anticipate God's reign in the ordering of human life. The constellation of social and political ideas that flowered in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and eventually limited the authority of popes and bishops, were nourished in the womb of Christendom.

Oliver O'Donovan has recently reminded us that the essence of Christendom's legacy to the late-modern world is the legal-constitutional conception of government: namely, of governmental responsibility and accountability to international law. "The presence of the Spirit in the church shaped the form society took in the West and, especially between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, in relation to government. The conception of the church as a mutually responsive organism inspired the conciliar movement in church polity and the parliamentary movement in civil polity."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, O'Donovan argues:

The flowering of an idea comes when it assumes a structural role that determines what else may be thought. Its origin is never contemporary with its flowering, nor are its organisational implications apparent to the minds that first conceived it. And so, as historians may point out with perfect justice, the eighteenth century was actually formed far less by the 'Enlightenment' ideas that we associate with it than by the older tradition of religious ideas common to Christendom. Modernity-criticism is less history of ideas than 'genealogy'. It is we who find the Enlightenment ideas particularly important, because it is we who have seen them grow to form a matrix within which everything that is to be thought must be thought.<sup>10</sup>

The genius of Max Weber was to perceive the uniqueness of the modern era and the manner in which it constituted a radical break with the ethos of agrarian societies. Unlike the Hegelians (and their Marxist successors), who saw the emergence of the modern world as the inherent continuation and culmination of a long and universal development, the manifest destiny of all human societies, Weber saw it as a contingent event in the life of a particular religious tradition, which was its necessary (though not sufficient) condition. Weber saw the Puritans – bearers of an inward asceticism and

an orderly, symmetrical rationality – as the creators of a radically different kind of culture, one that had generated tremendous cognitive and economic growth but at the cost of the "disenchantment of the world". Weber's scholarship is the expression of this anguished dilemma: the modern world, spawned by a particular religious tradition, would weave an "iron cage" in which the plausibility of all religious belief would be subverted.

The debate concerning the merits of Weber's partially religious account of the initially gradual, but eventually dramatic, spread of secular rationality has been vigorous. It will probably never be settled. But Weber's importance to us lies not in the explanation he offered as much as his highlighting of the distinctiveness of the phenomenon. A new culture emerged from the separation of nature and society into distinctive realms and the systematic application of the Cartesian-Empirical method to both. In relation to the natural order, the merits of the new cognitive approach (the submission to testing of theories by data which are themselves not under the control of the their own interpretation) have been enormous. Its validity has been pragmatically vindicated by the superiority of the technology based on it. It is universally desired. Science today has no serious rivals anywhere on the globe.

### Restoring a Balance

My assigned brief in this essay is not so much to critique (post)modern secularism<sup>11</sup> but to explore the positive opportunities it affords for the practice of authentic Christian discipleship and mission, East or West. If Christendom is not exactly our legacy in the Third World (excepting Latin America), nevertheless the ideas of Christendom have nourished the roots of the modern world, not least in its scientific rationality, rule of law and a liberal political order. And that world is the arena in which our obedience to Christ is acted out and our theological reflection pursued.

We should be grateful for the great benefits that modernity brings to our nations, not only in technological progress but also in breaking the stranglehold of traditional religious and political elites and social hierarchies. The romantic image of close-knit Third-World communities conceals the incestuous relationships and massive oppression, especially against women, that the typical "traditional" family embodies. Ultimately, "development" is not about merely economic growth,



but the empowerment of all people so that their created gifts and capacities can flourish for the well-being of the whole society. No one, whether Christian or non-Christian, who cares about such human emancipation can rejoice in the “end of modernity” chorus emanating from certain quarters of the Western world. But we also stand in great need of discernment lest we identify the “spirit of the age” with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth who mediates the reality of the risen Lord in the midst of historical change and uncertainty. If, indeed modernity is the prodigal son of the Christian narrative, then what would the return of the prodigal – the “recapitulation” (*apokata-lassein*, Eph. 1:10) of modern society in Christ – involve?

Non-Western theology cannot, then, afford to turn its back on the rich tradition of Western Christian grappings with modernity and the roots of secularism. Charting the genealogy of modern unbelief is a perilous undertaking, but many have embraced the risk. Hans Blumenberg famously defended the rise of modern secularism as an act of human self-assertion against the theological absolutism of the late medieval world.<sup>12</sup> In his massive work *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, Henning Graf Reventlow explored the widespread influence of ancient Greek, and especially Stoic, sources on the thinkers of the early modern period, and the way that the Bible, while still an undisputed authority in political and ethical argument, came increasingly to be read within the framework of an alien rationalist temper. The God of the Bible became the abstract deity of philosophical theism, necessary for the undergirding of a Christianity seen as a system of moral action.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, The American Jesuit Michael Buckley believes that the origin of atheism in the intellectual culture of the West lies “in the self-alienation of religion itself.”<sup>14</sup> His contention is that the great medieval synthesis of faith and philosophy involved a marginalizing of the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, so that Christians in seventeenth-century Europe tended to defend Christianity without appealing to anything distinctively Christian.

Lesslie Newbigin and Colin Gunton have also mapped the demise of Christian faith in the West along largely epistemological lines. Descartes is the usual villain of the piece, initiating a centring of “indubitable knowledge” in the human self, that led by way of Locke, Deism and the spectacular success of natural science to the cultural dispensa-

bility of God.<sup>15</sup> For Gunton, the story reaches back even further to Augustine’s deficient trinitarianism and impoverished theology of creation (which had disastrous consequences for the way the West has conceived of plurality) and on to the theological voluntarism of the fourteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

There are valuable lessons and insights in all these readings, provided we do not subscribe wholesale to any of them.<sup>17</sup> Mono-causal explanations of the rise of something as complex and momentous as modern secularism are, in any case, bound to be inadequate. I am also sceptical of attempts to over-intellectualize the processes of unbelief. It is more likely that the kind of social and political developments studied by Weber and others (and still little understood today) undermined the authority of religious institutions and made unitary, overarching worldviews less plausible. But, moreover, the Church has always stressed the corruption of the intellect by the rebellious human will; so the idea that simply “straightening out” our theology will automatically counter the modern malaise is naive. Perhaps professional theologians have a personal stake in this argument. It would be nice to say, for instance, that the Holocaust would not have happened if the Church had got its theology of Israel “correct”. But who, apart from some Western theologians, seriously believes this? And if, as some suggest, there is a strong correlation between our trinitarian formulations and our socio-ethical practice, then how is it that cultures in Eastern Europe dominated by centuries of Orthodox trinitarianism have been among the most racist in recent history?

No doubt shallow presentations of the gospel “turn off” sensitive enquirers and perpetuate theological ignorance. But, perhaps more importantly, shallow gospels produce shallow churches, and the lives of Christians have failed to demonstrate an alternative to the status quo and to embody the freedoms to which sensitive enquirers aspire. For instance, the South African theologian Charles Villa-Vicencio has observed that the “mention of the Christian God within the South African constitution has probably done more to alienate black people from the church than any secular or atheist state philosophy could ever have accomplished.”<sup>18</sup>

This raises the question of *obedience* which must lie at the heart of all theological reflection, East or West. The theologian’s task is to enable the Church to respond *Christianly* to the world it indwells. This includes the faithful and relevant articulation of the gospel, but it surely goes



beyond right articulation to right action. The most valuable lesson that the liberation theologians of Latin America have taught us – a lesson plainly writ in the gospel narratives themselves and the practice of the early church, but obscured by centuries of doctrinal controversy – is that obedience to the God of Scripture is the hermeneutical key to the right understanding of that Scripture. We may fault them for often narrowing that obedience to political action on behalf of the poor, for often stressing one side of the dialectic of praxis at the expense of the other,<sup>19</sup> for sacrificing the church as a distinct community, or of being too enamoured with obsolete dependency theories in their analysis of poverty and oppression. But their recovery of the ancient faith in Yahweh as the God of history who champions the cause of the weak and the oppressed, with the emphasis that all theological study must arise out of radical obedience to the Gospel's demands, is a legacy that the Church worldwide cannot surrender without damaging its own integrity.

It is at this point that fruitful links are opened up between Third World Christians and those twentieth-century European theologians who struggle with the question of obedience to Christ (not merely proclamation of Christ) in their post-Christian societies. Of these, perhaps the best known is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose impact on Christians concerned to be faithful to Christ in the political arena has been considerable,<sup>20</sup> and to whom we now turn.

### Beyond Religious Apologetics

Some of Bonhoeffer's most fruitful and profound reflections on Christian discipleship emerge from his days in Tegel prison. Just as Gustavo Gutierrez wrestled with the question, "How do we speak of God from among the poor?", Bonhoeffer in his prison cell agonized over what it meant to be a Christian in the face of the collapse of Christian civilization in Europe. In a famous letter written on 30 April 1944 to his friend Eberhard Bethge, he says: "The thing that keeps coming back to me is, what *is* Christianity, and indeed what *is* Christ, for us today? . . . The time when men could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or simply pious, is over. . . ."<sup>21</sup>

Bonhoeffer has no illusions about the pervasiveness of a secularist mentality. He notes that human beings can now cope with all questions of importance without recourse to "God" as a working

hypothesis. As in the scientific field, so in human affairs generally, what we call "God" is more and more edged out of life, so that everyone and everything gets along without "God" and just as well as before. But a Christian apologetic that ridicules or assaults this secular autonomy is pointless, ignoble and unChristian. Bonhoeffer is indeed vexed with the question of how the Gospel can reclaim such a world for Christ. But he warns that this will not be by traditional "religious" means.

For religious people normally speak of God where human knowledge is at an end, or human resources fail. They invoke the "god of the gaps", the *Deus ex machina*. Such a deity exists for solving insoluble human problems or as a support for human frailty. Conventional Christian apologetics defends such a "God" by looking to areas of human weakness, epistemological or moral, in which to stake out the Gospel's claims. So it is usually in the "borderline" experiences of *angst* or death that the "relevance" of the Gospel is proclaimed. But, says Bonhoeffer, "I should like to speak of God not on the borders of life but at its centre, not in weakness but in strength, not, therefore, in man's suffering and death but in his life and prosperity. On the borders it seems to me better to hold our peace and leave the problem unsolved." He adds, "The Church stands not where human powers give out, on the borders, but in the centre of the village."<sup>22</sup>

Bonhoeffer is here simply reclaiming the doctrine of creation. The God who creates and sustains the world is active in every square inch of it, in the ordinary, day-to-day events as well as the mysterious and esoteric. God is not found in some supernatural realm that from time to time impinges on the natural. We stand before God every moment of our lives, and this God is not the solution to our problems, the answer to our questions, the one who always intervenes to put things right the way we want. No, "The God who makes us live in this world without using him as a working hypothesis is the God before whom we are ever standing. Before God and with him we live without God. God *allows himself to be edged out of this world and on to the cross.*"<sup>23</sup>

Bonhoeffer in prison has not turned his back on traditional "religious" activities. He is, after all, reading his Bible, praying for his fellow-prisoners and singing the hymns of his Lutheran tradition. But he is conscious that "To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to cultivate some particular form of asceticism (as a



sinner, a penitent or a saint), but to be a man. *It is not some religious act which makes a Christian what he is, but participation in the suffering of God in the life of the world.*"<sup>24</sup>

Three days later, on 21 July 1944, the day he learned of the failure of the plot to assassinate Hitler, he declared, "it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to believe". Furthermore, "The Christian is not a *homo religiosus*, but a man, pure and simple, just as Jesus was a man, compared with John the Baptist anyhow. I don't mean the shallow this-worldliness of the enlightened, of the busy, the comfortable, or the lascivious. It is something much more profound than that, something in which the knowledge of death and resurrection is ever present. I believe Luther lived a this-worldly life in this sense." In that same letter he elaborates on this "worldliness" – it is "taking life in one's stride, with all its duties and problems, its successes and failures, its experiences and helplessness. It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly into the arms of God and participate in his sufferings in the world and watch with Christ in Gethsemane. That is faith, that is *metanoia*, and that is what makes a man and what a Christian."

Note, then, the double dialectic running through these meditations. First, the God who acts and speaks into the centre of life does so from the margins to which he has been banished; and, secondly, God is present even in the places where he seems to be most absent

All the stories of salvation in the worlds of religion (including the dominant schools of Hindu, Buddhist and New Age philosophies) offer us liberation – a liberation that is understood as freedom from the shackles/limitations of our humanness. The way to ultimate transcendence lies in breaking free from our individuality, our physical embodiment, and from our entanglements in this meaningless world of historical existence, the ordinary, everyday world of work and home. Our humanness is what gets in the way of transcendence or of union with the divine.

But the cross speaks of a God who is entangled with our world, who immerses himself in our tragic history, who embraces our humanity with all its vulnerability, pain and confusion, including our evil and our death. Here is a God who comes to us not as master but as a servant, who stoops to wash the feet of his disciples and to suffer brutalization and dehumanization at the hands of his creatures. This has momentous consequences for the world.

It moves us beyond private religious experience. And, we may add, in raising Jesus from death, the Creator was affirming our humanity, that this historical, embodied existence has a future. In identifying with us in our waywardness, he draws the human into his own divine life. Biblical salvation thus embraces the transformation of this world. The gospel vision is unique.

The "this-worldliness" of Christian hope aligns itself with all those men and women who pursue truth, justice and freedom for their fellow creatures. Does this mean that we downplay salvation by grace, neglecting to summon all men and women to faith and reconciliation with God through Christ? By no means. It is rather to disclose what we are reconciled for. The salvation-history that finds its centre in the cross and resurrection of Jesus enables us to discern signs of God's new order, inaugurated in Jesus, in all human struggles against fear, greed, violence, sickness, oppression and injustice. And it is *this* story, alone among all others, which gives human beings the firm assurance, rooted in historical event, that their struggles are not ultimately futile. Why? Because death, sin and evil have been overcome. And we have also seen that it is *this* story which, more than any other, has historically motivated and guided such struggles in the East as well as in the West.

Surely there is something perverse of attempts by some evangelicals to belittle non-Christian goodness and to question its motives as if this were necessary for the presentation of the Gospel. But rather it is this natural goodness (whether understood theologically in terms of the divine image in humanity or of common grace) that provides the backdrop to the horror of human sin and wickedness. An emphasis on human sinfulness may have been necessary in the times of theological liberalism, but an affirmation of human dignity, goodness and beauty may be what Christian witness calls for in other contexts (without, of course, going overboard in the other direction!).

Indeed, in a powerful chapter in his unfinished *Ethics*, written during the inter-war years when the Nazi stormclouds loomed all over Europe, Bonhoeffer observed that while many churchgoers and even theologians blessed the Nazi tyranny and turned a blind-eye to its atrocities, there were many unchurched people who courageously resisted the tyranny. They upheld the values and principles that the Church has nurtured. "Reason, culture, humanity, tolerance and self-determina-



tion, all these concepts which until very recently had served as battle slogans against the Church, against Christianity, against Jesus Christ Himself, had now, suddenly and surprisingly, come very near indeed to the Christian standpoint.”<sup>25</sup>

Bonhoeffer calls the above concepts “the children of the Church”. They had wandered away, their appearance and their language had altered a great deal, and yet at the time of crisis and ultimate peril the mother and the children recognized one another. “Reason, justice, culture, humanity and all the kindred concepts sought and found a new purpose and new power in their origin. This origin is Jesus Christ”<sup>26</sup>

Bonhoeffer brings into creative tension the two sayings of Jesus: “he who is not with me is against me” and “he who is not against us is for us”. It is with the Christ who is persecuted and who was cast out from the world, the Christ of the crib and of the cross, that justice, truth, reason and freedom now seek sanctuary. “The more exclusively we acknowledge and confess Christ as Lord, the more fully the wide range of his dominion will be disclosed to us”<sup>27</sup> And he adds, “It is not Christ who must justify Himself before the world by the acknowledgement of the values of justice, truth and freedom, but it is these values which have come to need justification, and their justification can only be Jesus Christ.”<sup>28</sup>

There are rich missiological themes here to be explored- the integrity of faith and life, the universality and exclusiveness of Christ, the “worldly” witness of Christians in partnership with others who care for the preservation of the created order, the “wordless” witness of the Church in times when her voice is suppressed and her authority unrecognized, the re-location of concepts of justice, truth and freedom in the narrative of the Christ-event so that they now derive “a new purpose and new power in their origin”, and so on. I shall briefly highlight two areas of relevance in our world of late modernity, of relevance not only to the churches of the Third World but also to those of Europe. And here I must move beyond Bonhoeffer.<sup>29</sup>

### The Marriage of Word and Action

On the 30th April 1999 at the height of the NATO bombing of Serbia, Václav Havel, the philosopher-president of the Czech republic addressed both houses of the Canadian Parliament. Havel shared his conviction that the greatest political challenge

of the 21st century would be to secure the recognition by all nation-states of the limits to their sovereignty. All states must submit to the rule of international law, based on universal human rights. At the conclusion of his speech he observed:

“I have often asked myself why human beings have any rights at all. I always come to the conclusion that human rights, human freedoms, and human dignity have their deepest roots somewhere outside the perceptible world. These values. . . make sense only in the perspective of the infinite and the eternal. . . Allow me to conclude my remarks on the state and its probable role in the future with the assertion that, while the state is a human creation, human beings are the creation of God.”<sup>30</sup>

Whatever Havel’s personal philosophy, his approach is instructive. He has raised-from within the heart of a secular public discourse-questions that every Christian should be raising in their secular callings. But such questions, to carry credibility and conviction, can only be raised by those who are known to be deeply engaged in pursuing justice and dignity for all. To champion human rights in global and local contexts, and to argue that such respect for human dignity only makes sense within a biblical worldview is to bring political action and evangelical proclamation into a powerful harmony.

It is the biblical concept of *imago Dei* which, more than any other, has provided the ontological grounding of human rights which purely secular accounts lack. For the idea of human rights consists of two parts. According to the first part, each and every human being is “inviolable”, has “inherent dignity and worth”, is “an end in himself”, or the like. According to the second part of the idea, because of every human being’s intrinsic worth and inviolability certain things ought not to be done to any human being and certain other things ought to be done for every human being.

“The ideal of equality,” notes Duncan Forrester, “haunts any culture that has been shaped or influenced by Christianity.”<sup>31</sup> Modern secular political theory takes equality for granted, however hypocritical has been its practice. Inequality is always a problem, an anomaly, something that calls for explanation and probably for remedy. Enlightenment documents, such as the American declaration of independence, are couched in language that is universal and theological. They are parasitic on the very Christian worldview that they are anxious to marginalise. “Human beings are entitled to



be treated with respect because they are of equal worth, independently of their ability, contribution, success, work or desert. That is the bottom line, the essential affirmation if we are to have an adequate justification and motive for generous and respectful treatment of people with severe disabilities, of the senile, and of the unemployable. But it is difficult to see how this core affirmation can be justified without theological reference.”<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, Michael Perry, an American law professor, has argued cogently that there is, finally, no intelligible secular version of the idea of human rights, that the conviction that human beings are sacred is inescapably religious. This is not to deny that many who do take human rights very seriously are agnostics and atheists where religious convictions are concerned. But it does raise serious doubts whether a vision of human rights can be argued for coherently and sustained effectively in societies which lack an appropriate theological understanding of the human person.

“If we have no reason to believe that the world has a normative order that is transgressed by violations of human rights. . . and if we nonetheless coerce others, and perhaps even, at the limit, kill others, in the name of prosecuting human rights, then are we coercing and killing in the name of nothing but our sentiments, our preferences, our ‘inclination of the heart’?”<sup>33</sup>

However, it is not enough to speak of a vaguely “religious” view of persons in an abstract sense as if there was some universal genus called “religion”; but, rather, we are dealing with a specific view, namely a biblical understanding of human personhood. The dominant schools of Hindu philosophy, for example, do not recognize the fundamental equality of human beings. Those outside the caste-system, the *dalits*, have no moral claim at all on the higher castes. My caste duties are also different to those who belong to other castes.

In the case of the pre-Christian West, scholars such as John Rist have shown that the view that such rights as “the right to life, to have enough to eat, to live without fear of torture or degrading punishments, the right to work or to withhold one’s labour” or that any other rights “are the universal property of men as such was virtually unknown in classical antiquity”.<sup>34</sup> Inequality was deemed a natural feature of life in the classical world and it did not cause surprise or regret.

Medical historians have pointed out, for instance, that the care of defective newborns

simply was not a medical concern in classical antiquity. The morality of the killing of sickly or deformed newborns appears not to have been questioned until the birth of the Christian church. No pagan writer—whether Greek, Roman, Indian or Chinese—appears to have raised the question whether human beings have inherent value ontologically, irrespective of social value, legal status, age, sex, and so forth. “The first espousal of an idea of inherent human value in Western civilization depended on a belief that every human being was formed in the image of God.”<sup>35</sup> It is doubtful whether respect for all human beings can flourish in societies untouched by the biblical vision.

That God, out of his special love for humanity, bestows on us certain inviolable rights, is a politically radical concept, not only in the Third World but in Europe and north America. It is God’s love for all human beings that authorizes the poor and oppressed to stand up and claim their rights to sustenance and freedom. Injustice is a violation of God’s own being. Both the Bible and Christian tradition have taught that the poor and oppressed have legitimate claims on us, so that striving for economic, social and political arrangements that help them secure their rights is a matter of doing justice, not merely engaging in acts of compassion. Moreover, while we reject the secular notion of autonomy (understood as self-determination) as the basis of human rights, nevertheless we must recognize that God’s love empowers his creatures to free themselves from narratives and practices that demean their humanity and to stake their claim in the world as the icons of God.

Thus the Church is called to bring before the public gaze the “forgotten” people in our societies—the poor, the disabled, the elderly, the outcast—both in its public proclamation of a different understanding of humanness and its demonstration of it in the Church’s own social practices. If ethics is the Achilles Heel of late modern secular culture, then the ethical becomes the site of gospel proclamation. The world must see the *beauty* of the Christian message, as well as its *power* in a transformed community, if it is to receive it as universal *truth*.

Sadly, Bonhoeffer’s own experience of the passivity of most Christian leaders in the face of monstrous evil is repeated in many of our contemporary situations. For instance, how many theologians in the United States or Britain who teach theories of Just War have publicly proclaimed the Gulf War as unjust? (Although the motive in going



to war was justified, in my opinion, the prosecution of the war violated massively the principles of proportionality and discrimination). Where are the Western Christians who have defended the rights of Iraqi children with the same fervour they do aborted fetuses in the West? The most persistent challenge to American and British hypocrisy and double standards in the rhetoric of human rights and democracy has come, not from theologians or church leaders, but from secular journalists, social activists and a handful of left-wing academics.

In advocating secular political/social ethics as perhaps the most important locus of Gospel proclamation today, am I simply promoting a pragmatic approach to evangelism, another technique in our technique-obsessed world? Far from it. It is simply what the public confession of "Jesus Christ is Lord" demands. The Mennonite historian Alan Kreider reminds us that prior to Christendom "conversion" involved a comprehensive change in a person's behaviour, belonging and beliefs—and in that order. It might be (and often was) accompanied by a powerful experience, though this was not considered as significant as the baptismal candidate's proven change of behaviour and willingness to identify with a community in which he associated with people drawn from all walks of life, including his personal, tribal and "national" enemies. Kreider observes, "the early Christian catechists were attempting not so much to impart concepts as to nurture communities whose values would be different from those of conventional society. Christian leaders assumed that people did not think their way into a new kind of life; *they lived their way into a new kind of thinking*."<sup>36</sup> Might this be the reason that early Christian conversions produced a truly counter-cultural movement, whereas evangelistic programmes in our time leave people "converted" but unchanged?

### Theological Formation

The integration of faith and life, of the theological and the secular, raises profound challenges to church leadership as currently conceived and the spiritual formation of local congregations. Secularism enables the priesthood of all believers, as bishops and clergy are stripped of their political power and direct social influence. But, even in those Third World societies where bishops and clergy have never enjoyed high social status, inherited models of clergy-centred leadership prevail. What, broadly speaking, unites the older denomi-

nations with the newer churches (especially the mega-churches influenced by American or Korean fundamentalism) is the self-perception of clergy/pastors as dispensers of religious services to the faithful, rather than as trainers and facilitators of the whole people of God that they may bear witness to the reign of God in the world.

The sad story of Church history is that it is only in times of severe crisis that the Church will change. While the irrelevance of the Church to the struggles of the poor have been slowly rectified in many congregations (worldwide) influenced by liberation theologies since the 1960s, it is only very recently that concerns are being raised about the irrelevance of the Church to its own middle-class professional members. And this because of declining participation, not a renewed attention to Scripture. As I wrote a few years ago, "Young professionals, whether in Bangkok or London, whether in medicine or accountancy, testify to being 'driven' by the pressures to conform to the values of a profit-obsessed work environment and to finding the life and teaching of their local churches increasingly irrelevant to their concerns."<sup>37</sup>

There is, of course, a cheap relevance that appears as "trendiness", a jumping on the latest bandwagons (though the bandwagons the Church leaps on are usually a decade out-of-date). It is true that the Church in its worship defines and indwells an alternative (eschatological) reality to our everyday world, but that reality incorporates the rich texture of human experience with all its triumphs and tragedies that is embodied in the congregation. The gathering of Christians provides the opportunity for the ordinary experiences of life to be shared (unemployment, shopping, surfing the Internet, street violence, etc), and for these experiences to be brought to the Bible for illumination and bathed in prayer for enlightened action.

The commitment of Christians is not assessed by the frequency of their attendance at church programmes, but their faithfulness in living out the demands of God's kingdom in their workplaces and neighbourhoods. Even when it comes to evangelism, it is the laity who are at the cutting-edge; yet clergy/pastors still draw up evangelistic packages which, instead of addressing the concerns and questions of secularized people and those of other faiths, expect such folk to come and listen to the "religious" questions the Church feels competent to answer. And such packages are exported to Third World churches for consumption.



What kind of theologians does the Church need? Most theological writing is “in-house”, written for fellow theologians. Yet two public areas cry out for attention. We need theologians who can help artists, economists, entrepreneurs, doctors and other professionals to think through in Christian perspective their “secular” callings, the taken-for-granted culture of late global capitalism or the ethical issues thrown up by new scientific technologies. We also need some professional theologians who can directly speak theological wisdom into the secular philosophical challenges to faith today. This is especially true in the West, for philosophies and political theories find their way into Third World universities and influence local intellectuals. As the political philosopher Jeremy Waldron points out, “in a number of ways the Christian conceptions out of which modern liberalism originated remain richer and deeper than their secular offspring.” The responsible theologian who recognizes this must seek to offer this tradition in public debate. Waldron presents a vigorous challenge both to secular political theory and to contemporary theology: “We might reasonably expect to find further clues to a rich and adequate conception of persons, equality, justice, and rights in what is currently being made of the Christ-centred tradition by those who remain centred in Christ.”<sup>38</sup>

Alas, theological institutions, by and large, seem ill-equipped to meet the challenges of living in a secularized and globalized world. The academic curriculum rarely reflects the changing nature of the world in which we live. In the West, the study of other cultures and world religions is a marginal concern, despite the growth of Asian and African religions in the cities of Europe and America. The only situation in which the typical theology student is likely to learn about other cultures, histories and religions is if he were to follow a course on “missiology”. In the more academic faculties these courses do not exist. However where chairs of mission or missiology have been established, these studies have become isolated from other parts of the theological task. They became what David Bosch calls “the theological institution’s ‘department of foreign affairs’, dealing with the exotic but at the same time the peripheral”.<sup>39</sup>

In seminaries in the South, the same parochialism is to be found. But it takes two forms: the first type is where the curriculum is drawn up by teachers educated in a particular Western institution and is simply a carbon-copy of that institution’s

theological and cultural biases. But the other form of parochialism is more subtle. It comes in the form of advice (also from teachers trained in Western seminaries) that the only preoccupation worthy of any, say, Asian theologian must be with what are called “Asian issues” or “indigenous cultures”. Similarly, an authentic African theology must address “African issues”, and so on for other continents and societies. It is largely a reaction to an earlier type of theological instruction that simply reproduced Western curricula and methods in non-Western seminaries.

Now I welcome the emphasis on context. The problem arises when I enquire further as to what comprises the “Asian issues” that Asian Christians need to engage. Quite apart from the sheer complexity and vastness of the continent, who defines what is “indigenous” or “contextual” in societies where traditions and customs have interacted over the course of centuries with traditions and customs from elsewhere? Moreover, the global is implicated more and more in the local. Most doctoral theses I have come across of Indian theology students focus on sociological and historical studies of either some relatively obscure Christian mission to a tribal group or of some Hindu/Muslim sectarian practice. Without belittling the value of these studies, I still wait to hear of a missiologist/theologian in India who discusses nuclear power, venture capitalism, biotechnology or the Internet with his or her students. Yet these will probably influence Indian society in the next century to a degree far greater than any Hindu/Muslim sect. Are they not also “Asian issues” which call for a missionary engagement?

Moreover, the primary area where secularism influences the theological agenda is in the so-called “scientific” study of the Bible. Yet the intrinsic humility of the natural sciences, namely their subjecting of all our cherished theories to a wide range of “worldly” experience that is not itself determined by the theories under scrutiny, is something from which all theology could profitably learn. Faithfulness to Scripture is not the only test of good theology. It is also: does it faithfully reflect and honour the experience of men and women today? The world outside the seminary, rather than the library, now becomes the testing ground for all our theologies. A crucial test of authenticity is then: does this particular theology empower the people of God to be obedient to the word of God today?

A healthy dose of scientific scepticism is also



necessary in countering the irrationalist tendencies of much Third-World Christianity. (I have in mind here the superstitious practices of folk Catholicism and Pentecostalism, the often exaggerated claims made for divine healing and the “miraculous”, and the pervasive cult of authoritarian, *impressario* leaders in the newer churches). Many churches and Christian organizations can also learn from secular institutions the biblical values of continuous self-criticism, tolerance, transparency and accountability in their financial dealings and decision-making procedures. I am often shocked at the lack of respect for employee’s rights, the insensitive corporate management styles and poor financial provision for retired staff in Christian denominations and organizations (in Europe no less than in the Third World) that are quick to condemn exploitation and abuse elsewhere. Secular corporations and institutions have a lot to teach us about biblical ways of work.

### Concluding Remarks

We have taken our cue from a trajectory in Bonhoeffer’s mature writings, namely a turning away from seeing the knowledge of God primarily as a “religious” relationship to a Supreme Being and instead as our participation in the self-forgetful, self-giving being of God in the world. The omnipotence of God is re-defined by the cross and resurrection of Jesus. It is not the absolute power of coercion, but the infinite persuasion of self-sacrificial love, a being-for-others. This is also the way of Christian discipleship in our secular world.

Wherever we live, the shadow of Christendom falls across the Church’s missionary path. The experience of the West and of Latin America indicates that a unitary Christian society cannot be built without compulsion. Africa has seen a greater involvement by Church leaders in political life compared to Asia, but they have usually lacked a clearly Christian social agenda. Indeed, some of the most terrible atrocities in Africa in recent times have been committed in nations (such as Liberia and Rwanda) where the fusion of Church and state has been as complete as any in medieval Europe.

No doubt the Christendom idea, at its best, sprang from a powerful missionary incentive: namely, the conversion of the Roman empire. Political power was not an end in itself, but a means for preaching the gospel, and curbing the violence and cruelty of the state. “The story-tell-

ers of Christendom do not celebrate coercion; they celebrate the power of God to humble the haughty ones of the earth and to harness them to the purposes of peace.”<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, coercion (religious persecution, we would call it today) is central to that legacy, not least against Christian churches that refused to follow the establishment. The death of the Christendom ideal should lead not to nostalgia, but to celebration at the new hermeneutical as well as evangelistic possibilities the situation offers. We are now in a position to rediscover what is authentically Christian, and to engage with secularity and new religious movements with integrity, humility and courage. In the words of the historian Herbert Butterfield:

After a period of fifteen hundred years or so we can just about begin to say that at last no man is now a Christian because of government compulsion, or because it is the way to procure favour at court, or because it is necessary to qualify for public office, or because public opinion demands conformity, or because he would lose customers if he did not go to church, or even because habit and intellectual indolence keep the mind in the appointed groove. This fact makes the present day the most important and the most exhilarating period in the history of Christianity for fifteen hundred years; and the removal of so many kinds of inducement and compulsion makes nonsense of any argument based on the decline in the number of professing Christians in the twentieth century. We are back for the first time in something like the earliest centuries of Christianity, and those early centuries afford some relevant clues to the kind of attitude to adopt.<sup>41</sup>

Moral and ideological pluralisms are facts of life this side of the eschaton, and the relationship of church and state has to be framed in terms of the eschatological reign of Christ, not of the empirical Church or Christianity. What form this relationship assumes will depend on historical and cultural context. A secularism that rejects the Christendom ideal need not fall prey to the equally mythical notion of an ideologically neutral state. Indian Christians, for instance, have unanimously supported the Indian conception of secularism that is not a replication of the American or the French model, worked out under her own conditions of modernity. One can envisage a spectrum of *contextual secularisms*, each justified pragmatically.<sup>42</sup>



This essay has been a plea. For the first time in generations, questions such as “What does it mean to be human?” are being discussed and debated in the global media. The question is fundamental for theology in every part of the world. Yet where are the theologians and Christian philosophers in this debate? In our technology- and market-driven environment, the real theological challenges are being faced by our children and by Christians working in secular occupations. Christians who are at the cutting edge of scientific and medical research, or who are engaging with new artistic media thrown up by the communications revolution, or who are caught up in the complex arenas of economic modelling and social policy, are asking questions of a profound theological character that professional theologians need to address. It is they who should be setting the agenda for our theological schools. Is it too late to envision a theological fraternity in every nation, indeed every city, that encompasses such folk and their work? If the Church is to be true to its calling, theology needs to be taken out of our seminary classrooms, even our church buildings, and into the boardrooms, urban council meetings, research laboratories and national newspapers.

### Notes

- 1 From P.D. James, *Devices and Desires* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989) pp.59-60.
- 2 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968) pp.313,315.
- 3 L. Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) p.18.
- 4 Andrew F. Walls, “Structural Problems in Mission Studies” in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark and New York: Orbis, 1996) p.150.
- 5 See Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988); *Encountering the West* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1993.)
- 6 See C.B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: CLS, 1961, rev. edn.1976) p.208.
- 7 Sanneh, *Encountering the West*, op.cit. p.191.
- 8 Quoted in Klaas Runia, “The Challenge of the Modern World to the Church”, *European Journal of Theology*, II (1993):2
- 9 Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.269.
- 10 Ibid.p.272.
- 11 I have attempted this elsewhere. See Vinoth Ramachandra, *Gods that Fail: Christian Mission and Modern Idolatry* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press and Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1997) and *Faiths in Conflict?: Christian Integrity in a Multi-cultural World* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999 and Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2000) ch.5.
- 12 Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Eng. Trans. R.M. Wallace, Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press, 1983). For a refutation, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Christianity in a Secularized World* (Eng.trans. John Bowden, London: SCM Press, 1988) pp.6ff.
- 13 H.G. Reventlow, *The Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (eng.trans. J.Bowden, London: SCM, 1984.)
- 14 Michael Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) p.363.
- 15 See, for example, L.Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989) pp.28ff ; “Truth and Authority in Modernity” in P.Sampson, V.Samuel & C.Sugden (eds) *Faith and Modernity* (Oxford: Regnum Lynx, 1994) pp.61-2.
- 16 See, for example, C. Gunton, “The History. Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 1993.)
- 17 For a critique of Newbigin, Gunton and other purely epistemological approaches to understanding post-Enlightenment culture, see Stephen N. Williams, *Revelation and Reconciliation: A Window on Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). A critique of Newbigin's analysis is also found in my *The Recovery of Mission* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996) ch.5; for a critique of Buckley's reading of Aquinas, see Nicholas Lash, “When did the Theologians Lose Interest in Theology?” in *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'* (Cambridge University Press, 1996.)
- 18 Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.265.
- 19 But note Gutierrez: “The ultimate criteria come from revealed truth, which we accept in faith, and not from praxis itself. It is meaningless – it would, among other things, be a tautology – to say that praxis is to be criticised ‘in the light of praxis’. Moreover, to take such an approach would in any case be to cease doing properly theological work.”, from *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, tr. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990) p.101.
- 20 See the review article by John de Gruchy, “The Reception of Bonhoeffer's Legacy” in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. De Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.)



- 21 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (ET, London: SCM Press, 1953) Letter of 30 April 1944. I shall by-pass the scholarly debate over how far Bonhoeffer's ruminations after 30 April 1944 represent a departure from his earlier theological views. This is not relevant to the present discussion. However, the essays by John de Gruchy and Andreas Pangritz in the *Cambridge Companion* survey the debate.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Letter of 16 July 1944.
- 24 Letter of 18 July 1944 (my emphasis.)
- 25 *Ethics* (ET, London: SCM, 1955; Simon & Schuster Touchstone edition, 1995) p.57.
- 26 Ibid. p.58.
- 27 Ibid.p.60.
- 28 Ibid.p.61.
- 29 My own arguments do not entail accepting *in toto* either Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the autonomy of the spheres (their "godlessness") or that Christ helps us only in his suffering. The next section militates against any absolutist reading of autonomy. But I believe that Bonhoeffer's statements in *Letters* needs to be qualified by the sections in *Ethics* dealing with the "four mandates" (Part I, ch.5 and Part II, chs.2 & 3). Even his cryptic comments about "reason, justice, culture. . .finding a new purpose and new power in their origin [Jesus Christ]" is a denial of final autonomy. Nevertheless, how to relate *Letters* to his earlier works is a muddy area into which I hesitate to wander.
- 30 Václav Havel, "Kosovo and the End of the Nation-State", *New York Review of Books*, June 10 1999.
- 31 Duncan B. Forrester, *On Human Worth: A Christian Vindication of Equality* (London: SCM Press, 2001) p.109.
- 32 Ibid. pp.30-1.
- 33 Michael J. Perry, *The Idea of Human Rights: Four Inquiries* (Oxford University Press, 1998) p.39.
- 34 J.M. Rist, *Human Value: A Study in Ancient Philosophical Ethics* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1982) p.9.
- 35 Darrel W. Amundsen, "Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children: Approaches of the Ancient World" in Richard C. McMillan, H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., & Stuart F. Spicker (eds.) *Euthanasia and the Newborn* (Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987) p.15.
- 36 Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999) p.23 (my emphasis.)
- 37 *Gods That Fail*, p.20.
- 38 Quoted in Forrester, p.73.
- 39 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991) p.492.
- 40 O'Donovan, p.223.
- 41 Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949) p.135.
- 42 For some further thoughts along this line, see ch.5 of my *Faiths in Conflict?*. The Indian state's secular posture was necessitated by two overriding circumstances: (a) Nation-building. If India, with its diversity of languages, social groups, and religions was to be forged into one nation, a public morality of tolerance was necessary. (b) The trauma of partition. This left a large Muslim minority within India's national borders. It was necessary to provide structural accommodation for Muslims if sectarian violence was to be contained.

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