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## **A Biblical Doctrine of Man**

David J. A. Clines

## **John Synge and the Early Brethren**

Timothy C. F. Stunt

*Editor: Peter Cousins*

London

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# Editorial

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There is a great deal to be said for producing issues of the CBRF Journal dealing with one topic in some depth. But editing, like politics, is the art of the possible and unfortunately it has become progressively more difficult to produce the Journal along these lines.

Hope has not been totally abandoned that future issues will include papers read at the Annual General Meetings, including some that were delivered several years ago. Meanwhile, here is an issue which focuses on two topics of great interest to members.

David Clines, who teaches Old Testament at the University of Sheffield, considers a biblical topic with a great deal of practical relevance. Timothy Stunt, some of whose historical researches CBRF has already been privileged to publish, puts us further in his debt with a study of an interesting figure who was involved with the Brethren Movement in its early days.

Comments on these papers and original contributions will be welcomed by the Editor.

DAVID CLINES

## A Biblical Doctrine of Man

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A comprehensive account of the biblical view of man is yet to be written; the following pages offer only a sketch of some aspects of that doctrine, particularly as it comes to expression in Genesis 1-3. In the first and fourth sections of this paper I have ranged more widely than those chapters, though what I have said may be regarded as an elaboration of some fundamental sentences about man in Genesis 1-3. In the second and third sections I have been chiefly concerned to explore the significance of two of the major themes of those chapters within their own context.

The first biblical sentence that speaks of man expresses a basic ambiguity in the nature of man. 'Let us make man in our image' (Gen. 1: 26) affirms on the one hand that man is *made*, a creature of God—in that respect no different from firmament, sun, moon, and stars, great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves. Yet on the other hand he is made in the *image of God*, or rather *as* the image of God. Whatever that may mean precisely (which is the subject of the second section of this paper), it clearly implies that there is another dimension to man's being which is not exhausted by names that would describe a mere creature—'naked ape' and 'biological machine', and so forth.

Man is thus both a part of nature and an entity who stands on the side of God as distinct from nature.<sup>1</sup> There is a tension here between the humility and dignity of man, between his finiteness and freedom, between his twin responsibilities of obedience and authority. This tension may be viewed as the site of the origin of human sinfulness, a theme that will be developed in section three.

Genesis 1: 26f. opens yet another fundamental perspective on the nature of man when it says: 'In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'. This points not so much to the sexual aspect of mankind as to the social aspect. Man is created from the beginning to live in community. So I have considered also, in section four, some aspects of biblical thought about man in society.

### *I. Man as Creature*

1. Man's existence as a created, and therefore finite, being, falls under the rubric of Genesis 1: 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good'. 'The finiteness, dependence and the insufficiency of man's mortal life are facts which belong to

God's plan of creation and must be accepted with reverence and humility.<sup>2</sup>

Not all of the imperfections, frustrations, limitations of human life are due to sin. Its fragmentariness is often simply an expression of its finiteness, which is what God has willed for man. We have no reason to believe that it will ever be otherwise for man. The sting of finiteness is sin, especially pride, the archetypal sin, which chafes at finiteness and makes pretences of infiniteness. But finiteness is not sinful, and man's destiny, even when perfected morally, is still to be finite. The Christian doctrine of the hereafter is of the resurrection of the body—a body possessed of some extraordinary faculties, to judge by the body of Jesus after the resurrection—but still a body; and infinite bodies cannot exist.

2. More light on the nature of man as creature is shed by the story of Genesis 2. This is not an account of the making of the first man, if by that is implied that other men are made differently. Only if we accept Genesis 2 as an account of man may we also take it as an account of Adam.

Genesis 2: 7 is our basic text: 'Yahweh God formed man from the dust (mud) of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being (AV *soul*)'. These three clauses would seem to correspond to the three 'divisions' of the human person as popularly conceived: body (made from dust), spirit (divine breath, *neshamah*), and soul (*nephesh*). Biblical thought does not, however, view these as the three constitutive elements of man, for there are other elements or aspects of human nature and personality that could be ranged with them and in any case the emphasis of biblical thought is upon man as a unity. A unity is not a unification or a composition, for as is often pointed out, it is characteristic of the Hebrew mind not to be analytical, but synthetic. Even the term 'a psycho-somatic unity' is a faulty description of biblical man, for it implies an underlying distinction of soul (*psyche*) and body (*soma*).

Rather, as has been correctly said, 'The Hebrew did not see man as a combination of contrasted elements, but as a unity that might be seen under a number of different aspects. Behind each aspect was the whole personality.'<sup>3</sup> Provided that we are aware that what Genesis 2: 7 is offering us is not an *analysis* of man into his component parts, but some fundamental *aspects* under which man can be viewed, we may go on to examine these aspects in turn.

(a) First, the body, or rather flesh (Heb. *bashar*), for Hebrew has no term for body, is an aspect of the whole man, a way of speaking of man himself. What is formed from the clay is not, as we



might say, the body for a man, but, simply, a man. We could not erect an anthropology on this mere phrase, but the spontaneous expression of the writer here reflects normal Hebrew thought. 'All flesh' usually means simply all mankind, though sometimes it includes animals. 'Flesh' can stand for the whole man: 'My flesh faints for thee' (Ps. 63: 1); heart and 'flesh' sing for joy to God (84: 1). Here 'flesh' is man as reasoning, willing, and feeling. Elsewhere it is man as an object, a body, as when Ahab puts sackcloth on his 'flesh' (1 Kings 21: 27), or 'a tranquil mind gives life to the flesh' (Prov. 14: 30). A usage peculiar to this term is an emphasis on the weakness of flesh, as opposed to spirit: flesh is weak, spirit is strong, as in Isaiah 31: 3: 'The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit.' Or when the psalmist says: 'In God I trust without a fear. What can flesh do to me?' (Psalm 56: 4).

In these passages, 'flesh' patently does not mean body as distinct from soul, spirit, or vitality, life. It refers to the earth-bound existence of man, which is in many respects shared with the animals. 'Flesh' is 'the life of earth, which is essentially transitory, and, like everything created, exhibits no principle of life in itself'.<sup>4</sup> 'Flesh' is in the Old Testament an ethically neutral term, for the most part; so in Ezekiel 36: 26, 'a new heart I will give you . . . a heart of flesh.' But since 'flesh' points especially to man as earthly, horizontal, created, finite and (especially) mortal (e.g. Genesis 6: 17), it comes into contrast with God, and the germ of an ethical sense of the word appears. So for example, Jeremiah 17: 5: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the Lord.' As W. Eichrodt says, 'The opposition between the permanent and the transitory world is in the last resort a conflict between the moral will which forms the world and that which is attached to egoistic and material ends'.<sup>5</sup>

The New Testament use of flesh (Gk. *sarx*), though more frequent in the moral sense, does not differ significantly from the Old Testament. Here also we find quite neutral uses: 'a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have' (Luke 24: 39), 'that man is not circumcised who is so outwardly, in the flesh' (Romans 2: 28). In those cases it is quite literal, i.e. the body or part thereof, but even where it means man and his earthbound existence, it is not necessarily condemnatory: thus, 'not many of you were wise according to the flesh (*kata sarka*)' (1 Corinthians 1: 26), i.e. if only human standards of wisdom are taken into account. But the world of the *sarx* is essentially egoistical, and to live on the level of the 'flesh' is to abandon the other, vertical, aspects of human nature. Those who live according to the flesh (*sarx*) set their minds on the things of

the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit' (Romans 8: 5).

W. Mord<sup>6</sup> helpfully analyses three chief elements in the concept of 'flesh' (*sarx*) in the New Testament: (i) it may stand for the whole man, not just the body; the 'sins of the flesh' are not just sensual sins, but sins of the will, or intellectual sins: idolatry, enmity, jealousy, etc. (Galatians 5: 16-26). (ii) Man is not just *sarx*, but spirit too, and there is a fundamental opposition between the two (not because they are different, however, for as K. Rahner points out, there is an even more fundamental unity of spirit and matter).<sup>7</sup> (iii) *Sarx* can be 'in opposition to God, because it represents not an ideal human nature . . . but man as he existentially is and has become, thanks to himself.'<sup>8</sup>

(b) Secondly, the 'Soul' (usual translation of Heb. *nephesh*) is not some 'part' of man, but another aspect of man. Genesis 2: 7 says that at his creation man became a living *nephesh*. The term must be variously translated with terms such as vitality, life, living being, but in general it and its New Testament equivalent *psyche* point to man as living, personal, human. *Sarx* may be understood as a person in a tableau; with the introduction of *psyche/nephesh* the tableau becomes a play, and the formal relationships depicted in the tableau begin to be lived out.<sup>9</sup>

The *nephesh* or vitality of the living person can be revealed in physical or emotional functions: *nephesh* sometimes means 'throat', a point at which vitality, or lack of it, can easily be detected; e.g. Psalm 69: 1: 'Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my throat' (not AV 'unto my soul'); sometimes 'breath', e.g. Numbers 21: 4: in impatience and fear the *nephesh* of Israel becomes short; sometimes 'blood', since blood (life-blood, as we say) is a token of vitality; e.g. Genesis 9: 4, 'Do not eat flesh with its *nephesh*,' i.e. its blood; Deuteronomy 12: 23, 'the blood is the *nephesh*.' Hence the image 'to pour out one's 'soul' (*nephesh*, using image of blood) unto death'.

Non-physically, *nephesh* is man as willing, desiring, loathing, rejoicing, loving, hating, thirsting; cf. some random examples: The beloved is 'he whom my *nephesh* loves' (Song of Sol. 1: 7); Joseph's brothers saw the distress of his *nephesh* when he was in the pit (Gen. 42: 21); what God's *nephesh* desires, he does (Job 23: 13).

Since *nephesh* is not a 'part' of man but the man himself, it very often means 'self' or 'person' simply, e.g. 'The Lord is my portion, says my "soul" (= I)' (Lam. 3: 24); or, 'The children of Leah were sixteen *nephesh*' (= persons) (Gen. 46: 18).

The *psyche* in the New Testament is identical with the Old Testament *nephesh*. For the meaning 'life', cf. John 10: 11: 'The

good shepherd lays down his *psyche* for the sheep'. For the sense 'principle of human emotions', note e.g. 'My *psyche* is very sorrowful, even to death' (Matt. 26: 38); 'Whatever you do, do it from the *psyche* (= heartily), as serving the Lord, not men' (Col. 3: 23). Very frequently, *psyche* means the whole vital man, body and soul together, as we would say. 'We were in all 276 *psychai* in the ship' (Acts 27: 37; cf. Rom. 13: 1). 'Whoever would save his *psyche* will lose it' (Mark 8: 34-37); 'losing one's *psyche*' means more than 'losing one's soul'; it means losing 'the whole man, body and soul, missing the whole reason for his existence',<sup>10</sup> i.e. losing one's self; the English idiom is most appropriate if we translate Mark 8: 35, 'Whoever loses himself for my sake'.

The term *psyche* shifts into an ethically condemned sense only when it stands in the way of another aspect of man's life, the spirit (*pneuma*); the adjective *psychikos* means 'on the natural level' (1 Cor. 2: 14). 1 Corinthians 15: 42 illustrates this excellently: the body is sown a natural (*psychikos*) body, but raised a spiritual (*pneumatikos*) body. Given the conventional distinction between body, soul and spirit, both 'psychical' and 'pneumatic' bodies are contradictions in terms; in Paul's terms, however, the contrast is between the natural and the supernatural order.

The idea of the immortality of the soul, or of the soul as the real person, is unbiblical, and derives ultimately from Platonic philosophy, hymnic affirmations about one's 'never-dying soul' and 'here in the body pent' notwithstanding.

With the development of belief in an afterlife, Judaism found a difficult conceptual problem: the person was surviving, the corpse was decaying. It was natural to speak of the surviving person as *nephesh* or *psyche*, but it is noteworthy that in the Old Testament and the New Testament these post-mortem personalities are supplied with bodies (e.g. Dives is thirsty, Luke 16; the souls of those beheaded for their witness to Jesus sing and wear robes, Rev. 20: 4), and in any case such pictures are of the intermediate state. To Paul, for example, the thought of being bodiless is a fearful prospect (2 Cor. 5), and his real hope is of a new body (1 Cor. 15), by preference to be put on over the old one, like an overcoat, at the Second Coming (2 Cor. 5: 4).

The significance of all this clear biblical testimony to the body as essential to the man, and of the *nephesh* as his life and not his 'real self', will be considered when we examine the theme of the image of God in section two of this paper.

(c) Man is animated, becomes a living *nephesh*, by having the breath of God breathed into him. The word in Genesis 2: 7 is

actually *neshamah*, but the more common word *ruach* (as in Gen. 6: 3) is probably not to be distinguished from it; the two are used as synonyms in Job 27: 3: 'The *ruach* of God hath made me, and his *neshamah* has given me life.'

There are two main Old Testament senses of *ruach*: breath or life as God's ordinary gift to man, and *ruach* as his extraordinary gift. In both cases *ruach* is essentially God's, the divine breath which causes a man to become a living being. But since it is given to man it may be regarded at times as his, and is often used interchangeably with *nephesh*. We may note the following examples: (i) *ruach* as the ordinary or universal gift of life. It is God's breath that animates not just Adam but all mankind; man has no hold over his breath or life, and its continuance is entirely at God's pleasure. At death the *ruach* returns to God who gave it (Eccl. 7: 7); if God should concern himself only about himself, and should withdraw to himself his *ruach* and his *neshamah*, all flesh would perish together, and return to the dust (Job 34: 14). When God takes away men's *ruach* they die, when he sends out his *ruach* they are created- (Ps. 104: 29f.). This is to say, *ruach* is *nephesh* in its aspect as God given (which is not to say that this sense is present in every use of the term). More concretely, the living man owes his life to God's gift. As the life-principle of mankind, *ruach* can mean the whole man, just like *nephesh*: e.g. Isaiah 26: 9 'My *nephesh* yearns for thee in the night; my *ruach* earnestly seeks thee'. When Gideon soothes the men of Ephraim, their *ruach* (RSV 'anger') is abated (Judg. 8: 23). The Lord stirred up the *ruach* of Zerubbabel and others to rebuild the temple (Hag. 1: 14).

But also, like *nephesh*, *ruach* may mean simply 'breath' or 'life', not the man as a whole: e.g. the queen of Sheba was so overwhelmed by Solomon and his palace that 'she no longer had any *ruach* in her', i.e. she was breathless (1 Kings 10: 5). Or, extending from that meaning, it can have the sense of 'vital principle', almost 'will to live', as in Genesis 45: 27 when Jacob saw the 'waggons and all that (Joseph) had sent, his *ruach* revived'. Or, extending still further, it can signify any dominant impulse or drive, a spirit (*ruach*) of harlotry (Hos. 4: 12), a spirit of jealousy (Num. 5: 14) or a willing spirit (Ps. 51: 4).

(ii) *ruach* as the extraordinary gift of God. The spirit (*ruach*) of God is frequently spoken of as given to man for special purposes. A good example is the coming of the spirit onto the judges. Thus, 'The *ruach* of Yahweh came mightily on Samson, and he tore the lion asunder' (Judg. 14: 6); the *ruach* of Yahweh 'took possession' of Gideon (6: 34), lit., 'clothed itself with him'. The gift of the spirit of God in this sense is not necessarily temporary. So when

David is anointed king, 'the *ruach* of Yahweh came upon David from that day forward' (1 Sam. 16: 13), and would have remained with Saul but for his disobedience: 'the *ruach* of Yahweh departed from Saul' (1 Sam. 16: 14; cf. Ps. 51: 11). The *ruach* of Yahweh also inspires prophets (1 Sam. 10: 5f.; cf. Joel 2: 28). The Messiah will, as king and prophet, be a man of the spirit: the spirit of Yahweh will rest upon him (Isa. 11: 2; cf. 42: 1; 61: 1; Luke 4: 18-21).

Even these extraordinary communications of divine vitality or energy (*ruach*) can become, especially when permanently or regularly made, part of the faculties or personality of the recipient. So it is hard ultimately to distinguish between the man himself and this injection of divine vitality.

One further observation of importance is that just as man's *ruach* may be understood as an expression of the whole man, God's *ruach* may stand also for God himself as a living, dynamic being. Thus the 'Spirit' of God in the Old Testament means God himself in dynamic action—creating, strengthening, inspiring.

The New Testament doctrine of the spirit of man and the Spirit of God develops the Old Testament ideas somewhat, but along the same lines.<sup>11</sup> In the New Testament the *ruach* (New Testament *pneuma*) of God, or rather, Christ, is given to all believers, not just to some, and is given permanently, not temporarily. Christian theology affirms the personhood of the Spirit of God, not meaning that the Spirit is another beside God, but is God himself. Man responds to the divine movement in his life with that in his nature which stems most directly from the same source: the human spirit, breathed by God into man. The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God (Rom. 8: 16). There is a relationship of like to like: 'The human *pneuma* is a capacity for the Holy Spirit, who fulfils it'.<sup>12</sup> In speaking of the human spirit as a faculty or aspect of man, I do not imply that it is a 'part' of man, for what goes out to meet God is the whole man. Body 'flesh' may be contrasted with 'spirit', for between different entities there is always the possibility of opposition. But opposition between 'flesh' and 'spirit' is by no means necessary. 'Spirit', just like 'flesh', sometimes plainly seems the whole man; thus Paul is refreshed in spirit (1 Cor. 16: 18); or, that Christ became a life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15: 45) does not mean that he had no body flesh.

This study of the terminology may serve as a warning against seeking in biblical thought any authority for a concept of man as constituted of several 'parts'. There are various modes of the expression of the human personality, but through each of them the whole man expresses himself. In this respect the Hebraic view of man is in contrast to Greek philosophical views in which man was

analysed into different constituent parts. When that is the case, 'accurate definition is essential, and the number of terms used will be limited'. But in Paul, as in biblical thought generally, 'no word in Paul's anthropology is so precise that it does not somewhere overlap another. . . This was no disadvantage. Man as a unity could have a hundred different aspects, and a hundred words to describe them. If some overlapped and became confused, it was of no consequence. . . . The one fact that remained clear was that man, with all his diversity of aspects, was an integral unity'.<sup>13</sup>

## *II. Man as Image of God*

Few though the Old Testament references to man as the image of God are (only Gen. 1: 26; 5: 2; 9: 6), their importance is unmistakable. Even if it proved impossible to define the meaning of the 'image of God' very precisely, it plainly signifies a close relationship of similarity between God and man. Man is the one godlike creature in all the created order. His nature cannot fully be understood if he is viewed simply as the most highly developed of the animals, nor is it perceived if he is seen as an infinitesimal being dwarfed by the magnitude of the universe. By the doctrine of the image of God, Genesis 1 elevates all men—not just kings and nobles—to the highest status conceivable short of complete divinisation.

But what, precisely, is meant by, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness?'

1. *The image of God is not some part of man, such as reason, personality, creativity. The whole man is the image of God.*

Throughout most of the history of biblical interpretation, theologians have attempted to identify some part or aspect or faculty of man as the image of God. The result has been a wide variety of opinions about what it is in man that is the image of God. Karl Barth has shown in a brilliant survey of the history of the doctrine how each interpreter has given content to the doctrine solely from the anthropology and theology of his own age.<sup>15</sup> For some of the Fathers, the image was the soul, or rationality; for the Reformers it was the state of original righteousness enjoyed by Adam before the Fall, the 'entire excellence of human nature' which since the Fall is 'vitiated and almost destroyed, nothing remaining but a ruin, confused, mutilated, and tainted with impurity.'<sup>16</sup> According to some nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars, the image of God has been variously thought to be man's self-consciousness, capability for thought, immortality, reason, personality, vitality and nobility. In all these respects, it is true, man is to some degree *like* God, but it is very much to be doubted whether any or all of these aspects were in the mind of the author of Genesis 1.

Barth in fact concludes his catalogue of interpretations with the sardonic remark: 'One could indeed discuss which of all these and similar explanations of the term is the most beautiful or the most deep or the most serious. One cannot, however, discuss which of them is the *correct* interpretation of Genesis 1: 26.' For it is only by considering what meaning the phrase could have had to the author of Genesis 1, and not at all by working from general philosophical, religious, or even biblical, indications of the likeness of man and God, that we can discover in what exact sense we may use the term if we wish to expound the content of the biblical revelation.

In the last few decades it has come to be realised by a number of scholars that the image of God is not to be sought in some part or aspect of man. Several kinds of evidence have pointed in this direction:

(a) The word for 'image' (*tselem*) is used normally for three-dimensional objects, viz. statues, sculptures, reliefs, of gods, men, or other living beings. A metaphorical sense of 'image' is not attested in the Old Testament. But has God such a physical 'image' according to which man could be created, a form which could serve as the model for man? The anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament, according to which hands, eyes, ears, as well as hatred, anger, laughter, and regret are attributed to God do not prove that. For the significance of such depiction of God in human terms is not that he has a body like a human being, but that he is a person and is naturally thought of in terms of human personality. Nor do occasional references to the physical appearance of Yahweh, notably in Ezekiel 1: 26 ('a likeness as it were of a human form'), amount to sufficient evidence, for it is always noticeable how reticently such statements are phrased: Ezekiel does not say he saw a human form, but only a 'likeness' 'like the appearance' of a man, i.e. the divine appearance is at two removes from human form. The typical Old Testament experience of God is that while he may be heard he cannot be seen; thus when Israel stood before Yahweh at Horeb, they 'heard the sound of words, but saw no form' (Deut. 4: 12).

Further, the human form in which Yahweh appears in theophanies (e.g. Gen. 18), is never suggested to be anything more than a form which he has temporarily assumed. H. H. Rowley is probably basically correct in saying: 'In the teaching of the Old Testament God is nowhere conceived of as essentially human form. Rather he is conceived of as pure spirit, able to assume a form rather than having in himself a physical form'.<sup>17</sup>

It seems best, therefore, to take the 'image of God' phrase, not as meaning that God has some image according to which man has been made, so that he resembles his Creator in some respect, but that

man himself is the image of a God who has no image of his own. 'In our image' may in fact be translated 'as our image', 'to be our image', and several recent scholars have followed this interpretation.<sup>18</sup> A classic example of such a meaning for the particle 'in' is to be found in Exodus 6: 3: 'I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai)', where 'as' is literally 'in', that is, 'in my capacity as, in my nature of'. In similar fashion it can be claimed that Genesis 1: 26 means 'Let us make man to be in essence the image of God'. Thus man does not *have* the image of God, nor is he made *in* the image of God, nor is some *part* of him the image of God, but he is himself the image of God.

(b) This understanding is confirmed when we consider the meaning of images in the rest of the ancient Near East. Of course the meaning of images cannot be satisfactorily deduced from the Old Testament, because Hebrew faith was strongly opposed to the use of images and accordingly no rationale for them can be found in its pages. The only Old Testament references to images scorn those who make them and are obviously not sympathetic attempts to understand what images signify. In order to discover their meaning, we must find out what they signified to those who used them in worship. Only in this context of the 'image of God' doctrine was the thought of images acceptable to Old Testament faith, and so we are forced outside the Old Testament itself for the background of the concept of an image.

The function of images of gods in the ancient Near East was to be the dwelling-place of spirit or fluid emanating from the god. This fluid was not immaterial, but was usually conceived of as a fine, rarefied, intangible substance which could penetrate ordinary matter, so it is often spoken of as 'breath' or 'fire'. The essential thing about an image is its possession of the divine fluid or spirit; it is that which relates it to the deity whose image it is, and which makes it an object of worship. The image does not necessarily look like the deity or like anything at all; some ancient images were unhewn lumps of rock or mere standing stones without any particular form. So obviously a representational portrayal of the god is not the chief purpose of making an image, though of course most images did look like something and were intended to portray some aspect of the deity. As the bearer of divine spirit, the image was consistently regarded as a living being, and invested with a life and daily routine of its own. In Babylonia, for example, the images of the gods were ritually awoken in the morning, dusted and washed, presented with a meal, and so on. An injury done to the image was a crime against the deity and was punished as such; hence images were seldom destroyed in war, but rather carried into captivity, where the image still remained an image of the god. It is along these lines that the



Genesis doctrine of man as the image of God is to be understood, with the necessary adjustments, of course, to the fundamental beliefs of the Old Testament. The further implications of this background will be considered as we proceed; at this point it is enough to note that it is the statue as a whole that *is* the image of the god.

(c) A third type of evidence consists of the references in ancient Near Eastern literature to human beings as the image of God. Thus, for example, an Assyrian court-official can write to the seventh-century king Esarhaddon, 'The father of the king, my lord, was the very image of Bel', using the Assyrian word *tsalmu* cognate with the Hebrew *tselem* as employed in Genesis 1: 26. An Assyrian proverb says: 'A free man is like the shadow of god, a slave is like the shadow of a free man; but the king is like unto the very image of god'. The use of the term 'image of God' for the king was even more common in Egypt, where especially in the 18th Dynasty (16th century B.C.) of the New Kingdom the pharaoh is often entitled 'image of Re (the sun god)', 'living image on earth', etc. Amosis I is 'a prince like Re, the child of Qeb, his heir, the image of Re, whom he created, the avenger (or, the representative), for whom he has set himself on earth'. The god Amen-Re addresses Amenophis III: 'You are my beloved son, who came forth from my members, my image, whom I have put on earth. I have given to you to rule the earth in peace'. Although these passages concern the king alone, and not mankind, their resemblance to the Genesis passages is plain, and once more the image is regarded as the whole person.

2. *Since it is the whole man that is made in the image of God, the importance of the body is affirmed by the Genesis doctrine.*

The image in the ancient world was a statue in the round, a three-dimensional object. Similarly man according to the Old Testament is a psycho-somatic unity. 'Man, and not some distillation from him, is an expression or transcription of the eternal, incorporeal creator in terms of temporal, bodily, creaturely existence'.<sup>19</sup> The body cannot be left out of the meaning of the image; man is a totality, and his 'solid flesh' is as much the image of God as are his spiritual capacities, since none of the 'higher' aspects of the human being can exist in isolation from the body. The body is not a mere dwelling-place for the soul, nor is it the prison-house of the soul.

Now the value of the body has been consistently minimised throughout Christian history, under the influence of philosophical conceptions, originally Greek, which regard man as primarily *nous*, 'mind' or 'reason'. The results of this belief in the supremacy of *nous* have been analysed<sup>20</sup> as: (i) an identification of rational man with the divine, with a consequent diminution of the worth of the individual, since individuality is bound up with the particularity

of bodily existence; (ii) an identification of the body with evil, which tends either towards an ascetism or a hedonism. But in biblical thought the body is 'not an object which we possess, but which stands outside our real being. . . . It is the living form of our essential self, the necessary expression of our individual existence, in which the meaning of our life must find its realisation.'<sup>21</sup> It is no accident, therefore, that the Christian hope for the after-life is not of the immortality of the soul, but of the resurrection of the body. Both the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of the hereafter depict a truth which is of present significance: the indivisible unity of man's nature.

It is to be noted that the fact that man the image of God is a corporeal being does not mean that God also is a corporeal being. For the image does not primarily mean similarity, but rather the representation of the one who is imaged in a place where he is not. What is particularly interesting is that when the bodiless, invisible God wishes to be present in the created world, the manner of his presence is this uniting of spirit with matter. God's image is neither spirit nor matter, but a unique union of the two. The doctrine of the image of God thus contains more than a hint of the incarnation.

3. *That man is the image of God means that he represents God, as a statue represents a deity or a ruler's image represents him in a distant country.*

The statue of a god is set up in a temple to signify his real presence there, though he himself may be in heaven, on the mountain of the gods, or located in some natural phenomenon, and so not physically present in the temple. A king may erect a statue of himself in a conquered land to signify his effective, though not his personal, presence there. According to Genesis 1: 26ff., man is set on earth in order to be the representative there of God. Genesis 1 has stressed up to this point the transcendence of God over his creation, every element of the world order coming into being at his unconditioned command. In this he is unlike the deities of ancient Near Eastern religions who are generated from the world itself and are therefore bound by ties of kinship and necessity to the world order. But remarkably we find at this point, in the doctrine of the image of God, an assertion of God's immanence, that is, of his presence within the world through the person of man. At one and the same time the author of Genesis 1 has freed God from bondage to the world-order by asserting the creaturehood of all that is not God, and has ensured that his statement of the immanence of God firmly excludes any possibility of man's divinisation, for man too is explicitly said to be a creature of God.

In commenting upon the repeated phrase of Genesis 1 'And God said', Bonhoeffer wrote: 'The only continuity between God and his work is the Word'.<sup>22</sup> But we may add: 'But from the sixth day onward man, the image of God, becomes the continuity'. In a sense, the word becomes flesh. The word calls the creation into existence; but the image of God is the permanent link between God and his world.

4. *The means by which man represents God on earth is by his possession of divinely inbreathed life.*

When we ask by what means the image represents the one of which it is the image, or what is the bond that unites the god and his image, the ancient Near Eastern concept of image provides a clear answer with its idea of the divine fluid or spirit which inspires the dead matter of the image with a principle of life. Genesis 1, it is true, is rather reticent about the mechanism by which man becomes the image of God, but that may be because it is concerned essentially with the function of the image, namely man's rulership over creation. But Genesis 2 knows of an inbreathing of God's breath (*neshamah*) by which man becomes a living being (a *nephesh*, 2: 7). The implication is not that man possesses some 'part' that is divine, a 'divine spark', for breath is not a 'part' of man, but the principle of vitality itself, which remains in God's possession and may be withdrawn by him as he pleases (Job 34: 14f.; Ps. 104: 29). It may be in fact that Genesis 1: 26 contains an implicit reference to the spirit, or breath, of God in the enigmatic plural 'Let *us* make man in *our* image'. The various suggestions that have been made to explain who is invited by God to co-operate with him in the creation of man all have their weaknesses, but perhaps the least unlikely view is that God is here addressing his Spirit, whom we have already seen in verse 2 in his creative role upon the waters of chaos, and who now is summoned to vivify the man whom God is about to create.

5. *Man represents God on earth primarily as ruler: 'let them have dominion' is the basic content of man's role as the image of God.*

We have observed that in Egypt and Babylonia it is generally the king who is said to be the image of God; it is precisely because he is the image of God that he is ruler. Likewise in Genesis 1 the concept of man's rulership is closely connected with the idea of the image; 'Let us make man as our image, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the winds of the air, and the cattle, and all the earth, and every creeping thing upon the earth' (verse 26; cf. also 27f.). Again in Psalm 8, which has aptly been termed the

best commentary on Genesis 1: 26, man's created status is linked with kingship and dominion:

'Thou hast made him a little less than God,  
and dost crown him with glory and honour.  
Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;  
thou hast put all things under his feet' (verses 5f.).

Throughout Genesis 1, and Genesis 2 also, God is depicted in royal terms, as the one who has only to speak and his command is done, or as the one who, like a typical oriental monarch, plants a riverside pleasure garden. It is not surprising, therefore, that his representative should also be described as a ruler. As the image of God man rules the world in the place of God as His *locum tenens* or vizier.

Over whom is man's rulership exercised? According to Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, the animals. Perhaps this sounds a rather obvious and uninteresting conclusion. But there is more to this rulership than at first meets the eye. In ancient thought the worlds of the gods, man, and animals were inextricably intertwined. Man was as much a servant of animals, or at least of deities in animal form, as master of them. Animal gods are usually the focus of religious terror, or at least, in societies where animals are humanised as totemistic ancestors, the personal freedoms essential to the development of full humanity are severely restricted. Genesis 1, by its precise structuring of the universe, in which man stands between God and the animals, liberates man from the bondage that results from the divinisation of the animal world. Moreover, it empties the realm of the divine of the non-moral, sub-personal, and bestial elements which are to be found in many other religions. Moreover, the rulership of man is not limited to the realm of the animals, but extends over 'all the earth' (Gen. 1: 26), which he is commanded to 'subdue' (1: 28). The animals figure prominently in these texts because they stand next to man in the hierarchy of creation; and Adam will be shown in chapter 2 exercising his authority over the animals by giving them their names. But the animals are, in the context of the image of God doctrine, essentially a symbol of the whole created order. The authority man is given extends over all animate and inanimate nature. He is not simply master of the animals but king of the earth.

It does not need to be stressed how vastly this Hebrew creation story, in which man is created to be ruler, differs from other ancient cosmogonies, in which man is created to be servant of the gods and to relieve them of their toil. Thus in the Babylonian Atrahasis Epic the gods plan the creation of man in these words:

'Create a human to bear the yoke.  
Let him bear the yoke, the task of Enlil,  
Let man carry the load of the gods'.

Genesis speaks rather of a divine human co-operation: Adam indeed is required to till and to guard God's garden, but it is a garden which God has planted, and which does not depend for its existence upon man's presence and work.

Finally, it needs to be observed what kind of rulership is granted to man. The image is not the god himself; the statue of the king is not the king, but only his representative. Similarly man as the image of God is not an absolute ruler, but a subordinate; he is a vizier rather than a despot. The world is not there for him to use as he pleases; he holds it in trust for his overlord to whom he is responsible, and who, if we may look at the outworking of the theme in Genesis 2, will look in on his property from time to time, and check on the behaviour of his vassal. Genesis 1: 26ff. is the cultural programme of mankind, which continues to be fulfilled whenever man responsibly and obediently plays the role of the image of God in his environment and makes himself master over the earth (including space!) and subdues it. The immense range of human activity that is comprehended in this doctrine can only be alluded to here.

6. *It is mankind that is the image of God, not the king, as elsewhere in the ancient Near East.*

In Mesopotamia and Egypt, when a god is spoken of as imaged in human form, in almost all cases it is unquestionably the king who is the image, as we have seen above. He is the closest of all men to the realm of the gods even if he is not already, as in Egypt, a member of it. But according to Genesis the image is characteristic of mankind generally, without distinction between king and commoner, man and woman, or Israelite and non-Israelite. Every distinction between man and man is secondary to the fundamental standing of every man as the image of God. The breadth of this doctrine is all the more remarkable when it is recalled how little in the life of ancient Israel appears to have been determined by it. Even though it is true that the Israelite king was never regarded as the Egyptian pharaoh was, as belonging to the divine realm, the king still often had semi-divine honours paid to him. And although the role of women in Israel was not simply menial, but in many respects a responsible one, the full implications of the image of God doctrine were far from being explored. And although voices were occasionally raised in Israel which spoke of the Gentiles as objects of God's concern, on the whole the reach of the doctrine of the image beyond the borders of Israel was very imperfectly discerned. This is perhaps a case where the vision of a writer carried implications far beyond what was originally intended. And that in turn points to the fact that the image of God is more than a status, but is also a role which can be more or less perfectly fulfilled.

7. *That man is the image of God, made according to his likeness, signifies a similarity between God and man, and hence the possibility of a relationship.*

The image in the ancient world is very often a likeness of the one it represents, though it is not necessarily so. 'The possession of divine spirit is the one decisive thing for the religious worth of a divine image',<sup>23</sup> and the primary function of an image is to express, not to depict. But Genesis 1: 26 goes out of its way to affirm that man is not just an image of God, which may or may not resemble God, but an image which is 'according to the likeness' of God. Man is not just a representative, but also a representation of God. A representative may have little or nothing in common with the one he represents, but a representation resembles the original, and re-presents its original. So in Genesis 1, man is not a mere cipher, chosen at random by God to be his representative, but to some extent also expresses the character of God. There is thus a spiritual relationship between God and his image which runs deeper than the inbreathing of God's spirit into man's nostrils. Here the author of Genesis 1 would seem to be thinking primarily of man's role as lord of creation, but once again we meet with a statement whose meaning may be greatly amplified beyond the original intentions of the author without doing him an injustice. The doctrine of the image thus does not only concern the relationship of man with the lower orders of creation, but also the relationship of man with God. It implies the possibility of personal communication between God and man, and puts out of court all talk of God as 'wholly other'.

8. *Nothing is said in Genesis or elsewhere in the Bible of the image of God being lost, destroyed, defaced. Positive references to the concept show that man is still, even after the Fall, to be regarded as made in the image of God.*

In the ancient Near East, once an image has become the dwelling-place of divine spirit it remains the image of the god, regardless of the vicissitudes to which it is subjected. In Genesis also man remains, from the moment of his creation, the image of God. It is mankind, and not just the first man, that is said in Genesis 1: 26 to be made in the image of God, for Genesis 1 speaks of the creation of species, not of individuals. Further, a number of other passages imply that at times far later than the creation of man, men can still be spoken of as the image of God. Thus in Genesis 9: 6, 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image', the fact that man, after the Fall and the Flood, is in the image of God is presented as a reason for the prohibition of murder and for the allowance of capital punishment. An injury done to a man who is God's image is an act against God himself, since the image is in spiritual relationship with the deity; and not

only so, the kinsman-avenger of a murder has the right to take another's life, for the kinsman also is made in the image of God and may therefore act on behalf of God in taking life, which properly speaking is only God's to take or give. Psalm 8 does not use the term 'image of God', but alludes to it by its description of man's rulership; here also it is taken for granted that the image of God is to be seen: here and now. James 3: 8f. says: 'No human being can tame the tongue . . . with it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God', a clear reference to Genesis 1: 26. This lively contrast would lack all point if James did not believe that his own contemporaries were still the image of God. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: 7 speaks of man as the image and so the glory of God; it is beyond our concern here to examine why he seems to restrict the 'image of God' to males ('A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man'), but it is worth observing that he does not explicitly deny that women also are made in the image of God. Finally, an interesting allusion to the doctrine of the image has been seen in the words of Jesus in Mark 12: 17. When Jesus asks 'Whose image and superscription is this?', and the Pharisees make answer, Jesus replies 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's'. The unspoken argument is: 'Give to Caesar the taxes that are his due. But the image that is printed on you is not Caesar's, but God's; therefore you yourselves belong to God'.<sup>24</sup> Whatever damage sin has done to humanity (and that will be the subject of the next section), man has not ceased to be the image of God. 'He would not be man, were he not the image of God. He is God's image, in that he is man'.<sup>25</sup>

### III. Man as Sinful

If Genesis 3 told the story of merely the first sin, it might not be a very good starting point for a discussion of the nature of sin. For the first sin is not necessarily the typical sin, the worst sin, or the archetypal sin; it is simply the first one committed. But if the story of the Fall is not just a story of the primeval past, we have better grounds for supposing that the sin spoken of is typical, the essence of human sinfulness. If the story may be viewed as theological reflection on the nature of sin projected back into the primeval past, Genesis 3 becomes not merely a reasonable starting point for our discussion, but the obligatory one, for it is then the most sustained and deliberate attempt in Scripture to analyse the nature of human sin.

Let us analyse the main elements in this narrative:

1. *The origin of sin.* The story begins with the figure of the serpent, who seems to be expressly introduced in order to affirm that

man was not himself made sinful, that, so to speak, one need not err in order to be human. The evil in man springs originally from a source external to man.

This is a very important element in the narrative, for it signifies that despite all our experience of the universality of sin and of 'total depravity', we have a vision or 'dream' of man's potentiality of innocence—what he once was, what he may be, and what he is to be. This vision of man runs clean counter to our knowledge of him, but in the Christian view lies behind every judgment that may rightly be made against man. Only grace, indeed, can redeem man from his sinfulness, but man redeemed and un sinful is no less man than the man of our knowledge. Jesus, unlike all men in one of their chief characteristics, is our guarantee of the perfectibility of human nature (the concept is thoroughly evangelical!). It is interesting to compare with this teaching of the narrative our tendency to use the terms 'human', 'very human', 'human nature' to describe man's sinful propensities; in itself this is adequate testimony to the corruption of human nature.

The serpent also signifies that evil does not arise outside God's creation; it is not that evil invades the universe, but that creatures rebel. The serpent is a creature of God, simply the 'cleverest of all the animals whom Yahweh God had made'; so evil is but a creature of a creature of God. This is a far cry from a dualism of good and evil eternally existent and constantly in warfare, such as we find in many religions (and even, in modified form, in Judaism, at Qumran, for example). A created thing can offer no ultimate threat to its creator; how much less the creature of a creature. The same attitude to evil informs the picture of the great sea-monsters, personified principles of chaos, and the bogeyman of the ancient world, as the first of God's living handiwork in Genesis 1. It is the same also with Paul's assurance: 'I am confident that neither height nor depth . . . nor any created thing, can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8: 38f.). Evil, however malign its influence, is deposed in the Hebrew Christian tradition from the divine or semi-divine place it holds elsewhere. C. S. Lewis' image in *The Great Divorce* of hell as an insignificant microcosm lost in a universe of bliss is a faithful modern witness to the biblical emphasis.

2. *The nature of temptation.* The role of the serpent in the story is that of tempter. This means that the incitement to sin does not arise necessarily and spontaneously from the situation in which man finds himself, nor is man's act of sin a mere caprice, an act of sheer perversity. That is to say, firstly, that the ambiguity of man's existence as a finite being with longings for the infinite 'as standing both in and above nature'<sup>26</sup> does not in itself constitute temptation. On the other hand, the temptation does arise from man's



situation as wrongly interpreted by the snake, who would have it that man by right belongs in the sphere of the divine ('like God') and is depressed into his present ambiguous position by the envy of God who will not allow any to share his rank. So the sin is not an unconditioned act of wilful caprice; it has grounds.

The acute analysis of sin portrayed by the relationships of the dramatis personae is brilliantly expressed by R. Niebuhr thus: 'Sin posits itself, (that is to say) that there is no situation in which it is possible to say that sin is either an inevitable consequence of the situation nor yet that it is an act of sheer and perverse individual defiance of God'.<sup>27</sup>

The way in which man's situation becomes the source of temptation is worthy of some elaboration. I have said that the serpent 'wrongly interprets' Adam's situation; that is to say, he lays a disproportionate emphasis on one aspect of it, his finiteness or limitations, and represents such limitations as an imposition rather than as a necessary condition of created existence. The prohibition of the tree of knowledge represents (among other things) a limitation upon man. The snake says, 'Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of any/every tree?' On this Bonhoeffer rightly observed: 'It is not a piece of stupidity, it is the very summit of the serpent's cunning, that it exaggerates so grossly in this question.'<sup>28</sup>

By leading Eve to concentrate on the limitation, the serpent misrepresents God, for he makes him out to be more interested in withholding than in giving. Eve is compelled by the situation that the serpent has engineered to justify God. But this is an activity Eve is stranger to. How can a creature justify its maker? Eve is thrown into a state of anxiety of which her addition to the divine commandment, 'neither shall you touch it', is perhaps an expression.<sup>29</sup> And anxiety is 'the psychological condition which precedes sin', 'the internal description of the state of temptation.'<sup>30</sup>

3. *The nature of sin.* It is patent that the nature of the sin is disobedience to God. This, be it remembered, is not just the case with the first sin, but stands as an analysis of sin generally. In various systems of thought sin is understood differently.<sup>31</sup> There is a moralistic interpretation of sin, in which sin appears as deviation from an external moral norm; a monistic, in which sin is identified with man's creaturehood or body; a dynamistic, in which sin is the breaking of a taboo or an offence against mysterious irrational supernatural powers. Traces of these conceptions exist in Hebrew thought. For example, the legal category of unwitting 'sins', for which sacrifice is prescribed, belongs essentially to the taboo class, and the concept of sin as departure from legal or moral norms is

by no means unbiblical. But without doubt the chief biblical understanding of sin is quite different: it is personalistic, that is, sin is regarded as injury to the person of God, or, to use the metaphors, unfaithfulness, covenant-breach, rebellion. Incidentally it may be observed that this personalistic view of sin dictates the character of redemption from sin. The atonement has to be understood essentially in personal terms, however valuable non-personal images like cancelling a debt, paying a penalty, may be. The atonement is the reconciliation of persons, not the compensation for sin; forgiveness applies to people, and not primarily to sins.

4. *The motive of sin.* If the essential nature of sin is personal disobedience, and its occasion is man's ambiguous standing between finiteness and freedom, can we define more closely its motive? Eating the 'apple' is not simply an act of disobedience, for the story says more than that the apple was forbidden by God. The tree is a tree of knowledge, and the serpent promises that when Adam and Eve eat from the tree they will be as God (or gods), knowing good and evil. As G. von Rad has pointed out, in so saying the serpent neither lied nor told the truth.<sup>32</sup> On the one hand, God himself acknowledges (3: 22) that 'the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil', but on the other, the sequel of the story does not recount Adam's joining the ranks of the immortals in the garden of the gods, but his being driven out even from the earthly paradise.

To what inner motivation in the couple is the snake's true-false promise addressed? It is no novelty to answer: pride. That idea, however, needs to be analysed, for pride is no longer with us a great sin. We often use the term approvingly ('a good workman take pride in his work'), and if we remark that others are proud of themselves, we often mean it rather affectionately, or at any rate consider it an anti-social peccadillo. Many people would say, I think, that it doesn't matter how proud a person is, as long as he keeps it to himself and doesn't afflict others with it.

This is perhaps because we regard pride as a moral failing, not as an irreligious act, an assault upon God. But in Genesis 3 Adam and Eve's act is plainly irreligious, and not just immoral; it is like the Greek *hybris*, overweening pride which makes a man act or think like a god, and which consequently brings down on him divine displeasure.

The central theme of Genesis 3 is actually man's attempt at self-divinisation. To call this the story of the 'fall' is perhaps misleading, for 'fall' refers essentially to the succumbing to temptation, which is not the chief point. The tree of knowledge is not most importantly a test of obedience or even a tree that confers knowledge, but a means of acquiring divinity. We might in fact call Genesis 3

the story, not of the 'Fall', but of the 'Assault on Heaven'. The prospect of becoming like God overwhelms man, and leads him to forsake his creaturely status. It is an attempt to move out of his God-given rank (expressed in Genesis 1 by the 'image' concept) that is *the* primeval, archetypal sin; and observe that man wishes to move *upwards*. It is not some descent into the subhuman or bestial, not some abandonment to sensuality or moral evil that entices man, though the fruit *is* 'pleasant', 'desirable', but precisely the 'possibility of an extension of human existence beyond the limits set for it by God at creation, an increase of life not only in the sense of pure intellectual enrichment but also of familiarity with, and power over, mysteries that lie beyond man'.<sup>33</sup> 'Every man would like to be God, if it were possible; some few find it difficult to admit the impossibility.'<sup>34</sup>

Since pride as a discontent with the limitations of humanity and as an assault on heaven is the first and typical sin, some further analysis of it may be in order. A most penetrating treatment is offered by Reinhold Niebuhr in his *The Nature and Destiny of Man*: it is perhaps valuable to summarise his analysis.<sup>35</sup> He distinguishes between three types of pride: pride of power, pride of knowledge, and pride of virtue, the last of which appears often in the heightened form of spiritual pride. Of the pride of power there is a kind in which 'the human ego assumes its self-sufficiency and self-mastery and imagines itself secure against all vicissitudes. It does not recognise the contingent and dependent character of its life and believes itself to be the author of its own existence, the judge of its own values and the master of its own destiny.' A second kind is a lust for power 'prompted by a darkly conscious realization of its insecurity'. But ultimately there is little distinction between the two kinds, for ambition and fear can never be completely disentangled. Ambitions to power may be attributed 'not merely to the infinite capacities of the human imagination but to an uneasy recognition of man's finiteness, weakness and dependence. . . . Man seeks to make himself God because he is betrayed by both his greatness and his weakness.'

The pride of knowledge is exactly analogous to the cruder pride of power, being derived both from ignorance of the finiteness of the human mind and an attempt to obscure the knowledge of the limitations of human knowledge. It is 'the pride of reason which forgets that it is involved in a temporal process and imagines itself in complete transcendence over history'. 'Yet intellectual pride is something more than the mere ignorance of ignorance. It involves, besides, a conscious or subconscious effort to obscure a known or partly known taint of interest'.

Moral pride is 'the pretension of finite man that his highly conditioned virtue is the final righteousness and that his very

relative moral standards are absolute. Moral pride thus makes virtue the very vehicle of sin, a fact which explains why the New Testament is so critical of the righteous. . . . This note in the Bible distinguishes biblical moral theory from all simple moralism, including Christian moralism.'

'The sin of moral pride', says Niebuhr, 'when it has conceived, brings forth spiritual pride. The ultimate sin is the religious sin of making the self-deification implied in moral pride explicit. This is done when our partial standards and relative attainments are explicitly related to the unconditioned good, and claim divine sanction. For this reason religion is not as is generally supposed an inherently virtuous human quest for God. It is merely a final battleground between God and man's self-esteem. In that battle even the most pious practices may be instruments of human pride.' As Pascal said, 'Discourses on humility are a source of pride to the vain, and of humility in the humble'. Spiritual pride means to absolutise one's religious ideas and standards. In this respect 'Luther's insistence that the pope is Anti-Christ was religiously correct'. But as soon as we assume that we are better because we are free of the Roman yoke, we have become slaves of spiritual pride. As Niebuhr puts it: 'The final mystery of human sin cannot be understood if it is not recognised that the greatest teachers of this Reformation doctrine of the sinfulness of all men used it on occasion as the instrument of an arrogant will-to-power against theological opponents. There is no final guarantee against the spiritual pride of man.'

Pride is man's desire to be his own god, and pride, according to Genesis 3, is the root of all sin. For to replace God's will by one's own is inevitably to disobey God, and the essential nature of sin is disobedience.

5. *The knowledge of sin.* There is another aspect of the sin that has not yet been discussed. It is that to eat of the forbidden fruit is to gain knowledge—of good and evil. This tree is not a supernatural one, like the tree of life which is a well-known Near Eastern symbol. The tree of knowledge is peculiar to this story. The knowledge that is derived from the fruit is not some body of knowledge (various scholars have suggested: the arts of civilisation, sexual knowledge, universal knowledge), but just that experiential knowledge that comes from one's first act of sin (this is not just something that happens in childhood, for new situations, new stresses, new temptations in adulthood create many possibilities for a 'first' sin). In Hebrew 'to know' often signifies experiential rather than intellectual knowledge, and often implies deep personal acquaintance and experience. Adam 'knows' his wife, God 'knows' the righteous.

Adam and Eve get to know evil experientially by doing it. I do not think that the tree confers on them any knowledge of good; *that* they know already—by not eating from it. God himself knows evil (3: 22) only in the intellectual sense, by observation. Man knows evil more intimately than God, and in acquiring that superior wisdom becomes less like God; in becoming his own god, he becomes unlike God.

6. *The consequences of sin.* Having considered the sin in three aspects, as disobedience, pride, and acquisition of knowledge of evil, we may proceed with the story. What follows is not merely a series of subsequent events, or even of punishment, but consequences with an inner coherence with the act of sin. The harmful effects of sin and punishments suffered by man are not arbitrary judgments by God, but as outworkings of sin are in fact further expressions of the nature of sin itself.

The first consequence of sin is a recognition of nakedness. Fairly clearly, this is not nakedness vis-a-vis one another, but nakedness vis-a-vis God. Most commonly in the Old Testament nakedness does not have sexual connotations, but is an expression of humiliation, e.g. of prisoners of war, who may be carried naked into captivity. Nakedness is regarded as the fitting end of those who have boasted of their beauty or power. Man recognises that sin destroys frankness and openness before God, and feels he must have some protection from God. To be seen as he really is would be to be utterly humiliated. The aprons of fig leaves show that man is not so utterly depraved as to be wholly ignorant of his true condition. He has a sense of shame still. This is not a matter of being ashamed of what he has done; it is shame at what he now knows himself to be. Not until he has something to hide does he know he is naked.

A second consequence of sin is disruption. Old harmonies are shattered, and undreamt-of tensions arise. The first harmony to suffer is that of interpersonal relationships. Adam immediately lays the blame on Eve, and indirectly on God: 'the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree'. In Genesis 2: 23 the narrator has adapted the conventional phrase 'bone and flesh', which elsewhere refers to kinship, to the marriage relation, in order to affirm that the bonds of marriage are stronger even than those of kinship: 'for this cause a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife'. The sentence 'bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh' may even perhaps be understood (with the comparative sense of Hebrew *min* 'of, from') as 'more kin than my kinsfolk'.<sup>36</sup> But now the community of humankind has been disrupted. 'The human race . . . has willed itself out of the subordinate relationship to God, with the fatal result that every individual becomes his own

centre . . . Since we are all alike in wanting to be our own centre, we are irrevocably divided from one another. United in sin, we become disunited in everything else'.<sup>37</sup> 'The sin they committed in common did not unite men before God but isolated them.'<sup>38</sup>

Another unity that is broken is that between man and the soil. Adam is made from *adamah*, the red ground, which co-operates with him as a partner. He tends the garden and 'keeps' it from wild beasts; he does not struggle against it. Now the ground is cursed, and man will eat his bread only by dint of toiling against the ground, which will no longer be fully under his control, but producing of its own accord plants useless or harmful to man.

8. *The continuance of sin.* A final aspect of sin as illumined by Genesis 3 and the chapters that follow is its continuing effects upon the human race. There is no need to supply a doctrine of original sin transmitted by biological means in order to understand the early chapters of Genesis. They say nothing of that, but simply narrate how mankind progressively deteriorates and gets deeper stuck in sin. The first brother commits the first act of fratricide, and before long the earth has become so full of human wickedness that God is sorry that he made man.

How sin is transmitted these chapters do not say, nor, I think, does any passage in Scripture. Even Romans 5: 12 ('death spread to all man') is no more specific. The mechanism cannot therefore be very significant theologically. If the notion of a genetic inheritance of sin meets with scientific or theological difficulties, perhaps we may see the means by which sin is transmitted from generation to generation in the sinful environment in which each new generation is reared. One sin has been enough to upset the moral ecological balance; thereafter each human is born into a world that is morally unstable.

Certainly these chapters do not mean to say that all men are equally wicked, or that men are as bad as they possibly could be. Abel, Enoch, and Noah no less than Cain, Lamech, and the generation of the flood, belong to the world of sinful humanity. Total depravity will not mean, if we go by these chapters at last, that all is as black as it might be; it means rather that there is no aspect of man's nature and no facet of his behaviour that is not in some degree tainted by sin, or rather by *the* sin of pride. The Reformers' doctrine of total depravity was really intended to emphasise that 'the depravity which sin has produced in human nature *extends to the whole of it*, permeates human life and experience *in all its range*; that there is no part of man's nature, not even his virtue, which is unaffected by it.'<sup>39</sup> Genesis 1-11, it is true, gives only one hint that a righteous man may be anything other than righteous (cf. Noah in 9: 21),

and that is an uncertain one. But we have only to move out of this primeval world of sharp moral definitions into the more realistic world of Abraham to find how far sin can reach—into the motives and behaviour even of a man who believes God and it is counted to him for righteousness, a man who is also father of the faithful.

#### *IV. Man in Community*

1. Man is created to live in society. Genesis 1 actually speaks of man as 'created male and female', that is to say, that inter-personal relationship is built into the nature of man. Genesis 2 more picturesquely, but no less profoundly, has Adam made alone first, and then God says, 'It is not good for man to be alone' (2: 18). If we bear in mind what 'good' means in the creation narratives, we realise that this is a more emphatic statement than appears at first sight. In Genesis 1 the 'good' is what comes perfected from the hand of God, 'good' is his judgment on his own work; in Genesis 3, 'good' is what is natural for unfallen man. An isolated man without others of his own kind is therefore a blot on creation, the one 'no good' part of a perfect world. One man is no man. God cannot pronounce the creation of Adam good until Eve also is made. This is indeed the smallest possible society, but it is a society. This element in the Genesis narratives shows how mistaken any analysis or theology of man must be if it operates with a concept of man solely as an individual ego or soul.

2. What does Adam lack? A woman? Some of our contemporaries would readily assent to this statement, arguing that without exploitation of one's sexual potentialities a person is unfulfilled, an incomplete person. But it is interesting to notice in what terms Eve is spoken of: she is to be a 'helper fit (AV *meet*) for him'. So she is not primarily his sexual partner, or mother of his children, or his housekeeper, but a helper. This term does not necessarily imply a position of inferiority. God is sometimes called the helper of Israel, and there is no question of the inferiority of the helper there. There is therefore a nice ambiguity in this term. Eve is also said to be 'like him', or more precisely, 'corresponding to him'; the implication is that only a fellow-human can be a 'helper' to man. The animals have, in the story, already been paraded before Adam to see if any of them can serve as his helper, but they have failed the test just because they are not human, not 'flesh of his flesh'. What Adam lacks, therefore, is not so much a wife, so that he may procreate like all the animals but another person, so that he may become a human being. The similarity of the two sexes is more important than 'la différence'.

3. But it would be wrong to stop there. Even Genesis 1-3 does not simply depict two individuals finding personal fulfilment

through relationship with one another. It is rather that man is created as a member of a family, and reproduces himself in the context of the family. The 'primeval history' of Genesis 1-11, as also the 'patriarchal history' of Genesis 12-50, is a family history. When Cain is driven out from the community of the family, the punishment that is too great for him to bear is in part that of being a solitary, a fugitive: 'Behold, thou hast driven me this day away from the ground . . . and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth' (4: 14). He is driven from the 'ground', the habitable earth, away from the community of men. But even Cain, the man-slayer, is man enough to know that a solitary life is no life for a man. His first endeavour, when he is driven away from his family, is to re-create a community. So he finds a city. But what kind of a community is a city? It is not a family, it is a group that is not kin. The city is typically in Israelite life the place where social injustice reigns, the place where the old solidarity and loyalty of the semi-nomadic kin group of patriarchal times is broken down and replaced by economic necessity and political pressure. Cain must live in a community if he is to be a man, but the only community for a man-slayer will be this inferior style of community, the city.

Another city-building is recounted in these early chapters of Genesis: that of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11). Here also the purpose of the city is to keep alive some kind of community: 'When men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there . . . and said, Come let us build ourselves a city . . . lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth'. But this attempt at community is doomed; the idea that men can create community seems as much an act of God-defying pride as the building of a tower with its top in the heavens or of their making a name for themselves. The only real community, according to this narrative, is the God-given community of the family. While Babel remains unbuilt and the artificial community is 'scattered abroad over the face of all the earth' (11: 9), the family line of Seth continues (11: 10-27), and leads to Abraham, Founder of the Community of Israel.

Against this background it is particularly interesting to observe that in Old Testament thought the city becomes the symbol above all others of the presence of God, both in the present age and the eschatological era of prophetic expectation. Zion becomes the city of God, where God dwells, the 'holy habitation of the Most High' (Ps. 46: 2). The form of the perfected world also is a city: the new Jerusalem come down out of heaven (Rev. 2: 2). That a *city* should become the 'joy of all the earth' (Ps. 48: 2) is a mark either of the ambivalence of symbols or of the redemptive character of the divine activity, depending upon the type of explanation one is offering.<sup>40</sup>



But throughout Genesis 1-11, what is being stressed is the fundamental kinship of all humanity. 'The peoples are members of one great family, and the list of the nations in Genesis 10, which is unique in ancient Eastern literature, includes Israel, proudly conscious though it is of its preferential historical position, in the general context of humanity'.<sup>41</sup> All nations of the world have a common ancestry, and are essentially a family.

4. When we consider the role of the group in ancient Israel, we are faced with the question of the relative importance of the group and of the individual.<sup>42</sup>

This is not the place to review the evidence for the importance of the group in biblical thought, and merely some examples may be mentioned. When Abraham is summoned by God to leave his 'country and kindred and father's house', he does not imagine, as a modern European might, that he is to walk out of Ur alone, but he takes his family with him as a matter of course. Noah is a righteous man, but of his wife, his sons, and his son's wives we know nothing; nevertheless they are all preserved alive in the ark. When the Philipian gaoler is baptised, his household is baptised along with him, though nothing is said of their belief. The solidarity is evidenced in guilt and punishment also. So Ezra confesses the sin of the people in contracting mixed marriages, and the people as a whole acknowledge their guilt, even although only a hundred or so of them had sinned.

Several factors contribute to the strength of corporate feeling in Hebrew society. There is the concept of the contagiousness of sin and blessing, as when Achan's family suffers for his act of disobedience (Jos. 7), or when the household of Potiphar prospers because of the presence of Joseph (Gen. 39: 5). There are also the historical events, like Exodus and exile, involving the whole people, which reinforce the individual's sense of belonging to the community. There are legal practices, like the laws relating to blood-revenge, and the custom of communal stoning of criminals, which contribute to the solidarity of the community.

But can we say that in biblical thought more emphasis is placed upon the group than the individual? It has often been thought that an evolution can be traced within the Old Testament from more community-oriented thought to a more individualistic attitude to man. Jeremiah and Ezekiel in particular have been hailed as the earliest exponents of individualism especially because of their emphasis on individual responsibility: 'Every one shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge' (Jer. 31: 30); 'The soul that sins shall die' (Ezek. 18: 4). These

are responses to a popular proverb that denied individual retribution: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge' (Jer. 31: 29). Rightly understood, these prophetic words are a rejection of an exaggerated emphasis on the group, not the first expression of individualism. And right from the beginning of the biblical story the responsibility of the individual is clear cut. Adam and Eve are real personalities who must face God separately and suffer separate punishments even though they have sinned in common; Cain and Abel, born of the same parents, are nevertheless vastly different persons; Noah stands out as an exception in his generation.

Yet what is perhaps most characteristic of biblical attitudes to the individual and the group is the way in which no clear dividing line between the two is drawn. The exhortations and laws of Deuteronomy, for example, are addressed indiscriminately to 'thou', the individual Israelite and to 'you', the collective community; that is, to the individual only as a member of the community, and to the community only as a collective of individuals. Who can say whether the individual psalms of the Psalter are the prayers of a lone individual, or the prayer of the community that uses the first person singular of itself? In speaking of the prophets as great individualists, H. H. Rowley says: 'That they were also concerned for the collective sins of society and for the collective well-being of society should be remembered. There was a balance and wholeness in their thought that is often lacking in ours. Too often in our thought sin is wholly an individual thing, and we forget that the community has a life and a character and a will, and that it may defy the will of God and therefore sin, to its own grave hurt and the hurt of all its members'.<sup>43</sup>

In the New Testament also, how hard it is to see whether the individual or the community is given more prominence. It is the individual that repents and believes, grows in Christ, keeps his commandments, is filled with the Spirit. Yet so many of the key concepts belong to community thinking: the kingdom of God, the new covenant, the church.

The biblical view of man does not set a tension between man as individual and man as a member of society, but rather blurs the distinction, and thereby emphasises that either of these aspects in isolation is artificial. Just as the personality of man is understood not by analysis of various aspects but by comprehending a network of relationships of body, life, spirit, and so on (see section I above), so the nature of man cannot be understood by considering him first as an individual and then as a member of a society, but only by seeing his functions and relationships as a totality.

## NOTES

- 1 Cf. A. Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, p. 199: 'In every religion what is sought by the help of the superhuman power revered by man is a solution of the contradiction in which man finds himself as both a part of nature and a spiritual personality claiming to deminate nature'.
- 2 R. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, i, p. 179.
- 3 W. D. Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man*, p. 222.
- 4 W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, i, pp. 215f.
- 5 Op. cit., p. 216.
- 6 *The Biblical Meaning of Man*, pp. 24-32.
- 7 'The Unity of Spirit and Matter: A Christian Understanding', in *Man Before God*, ed. D. Burkhard et al., pp. 25-51.
- 8 Mork, op. cit., p. 32. Cf. W. Kümmel, *Man in the New Testament*, pp. 62f.: 'Sarx denotes the man who lets himself be determined by his actual historical existence in the world; it does not describe man in his fundamental nature, but rather in his membership in this passing evil age'.
- 9 So Mork, op. cit., p. 128.
- 10 Mork, op. cit., p. 51.
- 11 'It may be that *pneuma* goes beyond *ruach*, and that the highest teaching of Paul on the Spirit is original, but, from one point of view, *pneuma* reproduces its Hebraic antecedents exactly . . . (in both Testaments) 'spirit' was used both for an invading power, and a natural element in the personality. The new faculties of the Christian life were expressed, as Old Testament writers had expressed similar experiences, by reference to indwelling spirits' (W. D. Stacey, op. cit., p. 224).
- 12 W. Mork, op. cit., p. 112.
- 13 W. D. Stacey, op. cit., p. 223.
- 14 On the whole subject, see for further detail and references my article, 'The Image of God in Man', *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968), pp. 53-103, *Church Dogmatics* III/1, pp. 192ff.
- 15 J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, pp. 164f.
- 16 *The Faith of Israel*, pp. 75f.
- 17 So e.g. G. von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 56; E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 167f.
- 18 D. Kidner, *Genesis* (Tyndale OT Commentaries), p. 51.
- 19 So R. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, I, p. 7.
- 20 W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, p. 149.
- 21 D. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 19.
- 22 K. H. Bernhardt, *Gott und Bild*, p. 67.
- 23 So D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, p. 30.
- 24 K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1, p. 184.
- 25 R. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, I, p. 178.
- 26 Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 181.
- 27 D. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 68.
- 28 This addition is to be regarded as a 'fence about the Torah', a rabbinic term for a human commandment more strict than the divine commandment, laid down to prevent a man from coming too dangerously near to breaking the divine commandment itself.
- 29 Niebuhr, op. cit., I, p. 182; the first description is quoted by Niebuhr from Kierkegaard.
- 30 For these categories, see S. J. De Vries, 'Sin', in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, IV, p. 362.

- 32 Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 87.
- 33 Von Rad, loc. cit.
- 34 Bertrand Russell, *Power. A New Social Analysis*, p. 11.
- 35 Niebuhr, op. cit., I, pp. 186-207.
- 36 A. Dubarle, 'La conception de l'homme dans l'Ancien Testament', in *Sacra Pagina*, I, p. 531.
- 37 D. R. Davies, *Down Peacocks' Feathers*.
- 38 G. von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 89.
- 39 J. S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 40.
- 40 On the general subject, see J. Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*.
- 41 W. Eichrodt, *Man in the Old Testament*, p. 36.
- 42 On the subject, see H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel*, pp. 99-123 (ch. 3 'Individual and Community').

TIMOTHY STUNT

## John Synge and the Early Brethren

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One of the names referred to from time to time in the history of the early Brethren movement is that of John Synge, and yet we are told very little about him and the details of his career are rather elusive. The recent publication of Edward Stephens' biography of the dramatist John Millington Synge has some information about his grandfather, but even so the picture is incomplete. The purpose of the present paper is to bring the various materials together, so as to shed more light on the aspirations of the early Brethren.

The Synge family were well known landowners in Ireland. One of John Synge's great-grandfathers was Nicholas Synge and another was Samuel Hutchinson, both of whom were Bishops of Killala. Nicholas' son Edward married Sophia Hutchinson and their sixth son Francis Synge (John's father) established the family estates in County Wicklow at Roundwood and Glanmore or Glenmore where he spent a lot of money extending the mansion which he called Glanmore Castle.<sup>1</sup>

### *Influence of Pestalozzi*

Born in 1788, John Synge attended both Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford<sup>2</sup> and in 1812 went on a continental tour spending some time in Spain and Portugal where he was able to watch Wellington's exploits in the Peninsular War. In 1814 on his way back from Italy he reached Yverdon in Switzerland and was persuaded with some difficulty to visit Pestalozzi's Institute. Synge was so impressed by Pestalozzi and by the happiness and intelligent interest shown by the children that he remained at Yverdon for three months instead of the two hours he had originally intended. He wrote enthusiastic letters to his friend Digges La Touche back in Dublin, explaining Pestalozzi's system.<sup>3</sup>

The educational methods in practice at the turn of the 19th century were not generally very successful. Synge's original refusal to visit the Institute at Yverdon was because he felt "no small degree of prejudice against the schemes of education from the little he had seen of the mechanical systems practised at home."<sup>4</sup> Pestalozzi's genius was to see the problem of education from the child's point of view. Abandoning the attitude that the child's mind was a sort of bottle into which as much information and procedural formulae should be poured as was possible in the time available, Pestalozzi believed that there were innate powers of knowledge in a child that had to be awakened. He felt that in the innocence of the infant there

was still some trace of the divine nature and that it was the responsibility of the teacher to bring these innate abilities to fruition. Indeed he insisted that "intuition is absolutely the foundation of all knowledge."<sup>5</sup>

Obviously Pestalozzi owed a great deal to the intuitionary theories of Rousseau's *Emile* and the Romantic Movement; nevertheless, his understanding of the problem was imbued with a spiritual depth which derived from his own deep Christian faith and compassion. Indeed he applied his child-centred ideas to questions of spiritual understanding as well. In what is probably his most famous work, *How Gertrude Teaches her Children*, Pestalozzi emphasises the spiritual role of the mother in bringing up her family. In answer to the question, "How does the idea of God develop in my soul?" he answers: "The feelings of love, trust, gratitude, and the readiness to obey must be developed in me before I can apply them to God. I must love men, trust men, thank men, and obey men before I can aspire to love, trust, thank and obey God."<sup>6</sup> And it is precisely in the introduction of the child to such experiences as love, trust and thankfulness that the role of the mother in Pestalozzi's scheme is so crucial.

Child-centred education is fairly common-place now, in principle at any rate. If an older generation learnt multiplication at school solely by means of table recitation, our children are almost certainly also learning to multiply with apples or counters. Similarly in the spiritual realm, though some evangelical Christians are fearful of a too anthropocentric existentialism, nevertheless we have learnt that it is of little use telling a person that God is a loving Father if he has never known a father who loved him. At the turn of the 19th century child-centred education was something revolutionary coming after the coldly systematic thinking of the enlightenment, and John Synge's enthusiasm was unbounded. On his return home he promptly transferred his enthusiasm into print by publishing a *Biographical Sketch of the Struggles of Pestalozzi to Establish his System of Education, chiefly from his own works, by an Irish Traveller*.

It is clear from this publication that Synge was particularly struck by the happiness and reduction of misery that Pestalozzi's system made possible. He proceeded to open a school at Roundwood for the villagers and established a printing press to produce manuals and texts for such teaching. A variety of these teaching aids are to be found in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.<sup>7</sup> There can be little doubt that Synge's school was a success. In letters to Pestalozzi, he explains that the children are taught for three or four hours each day in language, arithmetic and geometry; time is also spent reading the Bible. The remainder of the day is occupied with practical work

on the land or in the production of footwear or straw hats. Bearing in mind the backwardness of the Irish economy this was fairly revolutionary and it is hardly surprising that Synge reports to Pestalozzi that one teacher who has adopted the new methods has been reprimanded by the governors as the latter are afraid that the children will not be happy with the position of servants if they prove to be cleverer than their masters.<sup>8</sup>

Another advocate of Pestalozzi's methods, writing in the *Christian Examiner*, prefaced his account of his visit to Switzerland in 1817 by saying: "My mind, I confess, was prejudiced in favour of Pestalozzi's plans from what little I had seen of them in my friend Synge's poor school in the County of Wicklow."<sup>9</sup> Where Pestalozzi, largely through lack of money, had often been unsuccessful, Synge's venture seems to have flourished. There is a field near Roundwood where the school formerly stood, and it is still known as "the schoolhouse field."

John Synge was an evangelical churchman, and soon found himself having to defend Pestalozzi from the charge we have referred to earlier, namely, that his principles conflicted with the doctrine of original sin. In 1818 Synge asked Pestalozzi to make it clear that he accepted the doctrine of the fall of man.<sup>10</sup> Pestalozzi was in fact primarily an educational practitioner rather than a theologian, and his statements on such matters never fully satisfied many Evangelicals. Samuel Gobat for example, himself a child of the Swiss Revival of the early 19th century and later Bishop of Jerusalem, criticised the false foundations of Pestalozzi's system and implied that Pestalozzi admitted this in his old age.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand one of the greatest admirers of Pestalozzi in England was the educationist J. P. Greaves whose sister played an important part in the beginnings of the revival in the Canton of Vaud between 1815 and 1822.<sup>12</sup> Both Greaves and Synge refused to accept that Pestalozzi's method was faulty theologically and Synge, in particular, was a staunch Evangelical.

#### *Criticism of the Established Church*

When in 1818 he married Isabella Hamilton, John Synge took charge of Roundwood, as his father moved to Glanmore Castle. At Roundwood the school continued to flourish, but Synge's activities were clearly not confined to this work. He was in touch with friends like James Digges La Touche and John Vesey Parnell (later Lord Congleton), who together with him were "strongly influenced by the teaching of John Nelson Darby."<sup>13</sup> Possibly before Synge was in close touch with Darby, he met Anthony Norris Groves who had given up his dental practice in Exeter and in 1826 had begun to come to Trinity College, Dublin for quarterly examinations, with the

intention of being ordained and going as a missionary to Bagdad. It was possibly at Groves' suggestion that Synge moved in 1827 to Devon where he bought Buckridge House, near Teignmouth. It was also said that he moved on account of his wife's poor health, but his interest in Groves was probably a more important factor.<sup>14</sup>

Groves' decision in 1828, to abandon his plans for ordination, and to go to Bagdad almost at once, created problems for two of his associates. The first was the deaf scholar John Kitto who had once helped Groves as a dental craftsman and who regarded him as benefactor and patron.<sup>15</sup> However in April 1829 Kitto heard from Groves that he could take employment "with Mr. Synge, a dear friend of mine, at Teignmouth, for three or six months from the 1st of June next, to help in printing some little works he is carrying on in Greek and Hebrew."<sup>16</sup> In fact, after accepting the offer, Kitto unexpectedly decided to go abroad with Groves. The other of Groves' associates affected by his change of plan was Henry Craik who had been tutoring his children. He too was now offered a post at Buckridge House, as tutor to Synge's children.<sup>17</sup>

It appears from Craik's Journal that Synge was absent (possibly in Ireland) during June and July 1828 and that Craik may have still been living with Groves, though he was already preparing for his work in the Synge household.<sup>18</sup> Before long, however, he was living at Buckridge and working there.

Synge's object in engaging Craik was not simply to get a tutor for his sons, but also to secure the help of someone with an adequate grasp of classical studies to assist him in the preparation of his educational publications. There are several references in Craik's *Diary* to "Greek Roots for Mr. Synge". The entry for Monday the 10th of August 1829, reads: "Morning at Genesis with Mr. Synge. Forenoon, as usual, with my pupils. Spent the afternoon in my study, and had a long and happy solitary walk. Evening engaged with Homer, and Greek Testament translations for Mr. Synge."<sup>19</sup> It appears that Craik's employer was again away in Ireland for a period beginning in December 1829 as the tutor's *Diary* speaks of "removing into my new lodgings" and "walking over to Teignmouth with the proof for the printer."<sup>20</sup>

In fact Craik was an ideal assistant for Synge. Both were enthusiastic in their interest in Hebrew and both were preparing books for students of the language. Synge's volume was entitled *An Easy Introduction to the Hebrew Language on the Principles of Pestalozzi* by Parens.<sup>21</sup> Craik's book was *Principia Hebraica; or an Easy Introduction to the Hebrew Language: exhibiting, in twenty four tables, the interpretation of all the Hebrew and Chaldee words, both primitives and derivatives, contained in the Old Testament*



*Scriptures*. It was published in 1831 like Synge's book and printed at Synge's expense on his own printing press.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time it can hardly have been purely an academic friendship. Both men were sincerely devout and there must have been lengthy discussion between them in spite of the seventeen years' difference in their ages. Craik had been brought up as a Presbyterian but while he was staying at Buckridge he adopted Baptist views and preached at the Shaldon Baptist Church which was probably where he met George Müller in 1829, with whom he was to co-operate for many years to come.<sup>23</sup> It is impossible to imagine that such matters and issues, which were the talking point of so many Christians dissatisfied with the current slumber of both Established and Dissenting Churches, were not debated at length by Synge and his young tutor. Synge was an Anglican but by no means a very traditionally minded one, as was shortly to become apparent.

In June or July 1831, two or three months after Craik had left Buckridge to become the regular pastor at Shaldon Baptist Chapel, two clergymen from Oxford came on a preaching tour in the West Country. One of them was William Tiptaft, the Vicar of Sutton Courtney, later to secede and become a strict Baptist, while the other was Henry Bellendon Bulteel, curate of St. Ebbe's, at Oxford, whose University Sermon in February 1831 had rebuked ecclesiastical malpractices in high places, and had dared to ask whether the Church of England was any longer led by the Holy Spirit of God.<sup>24</sup> Bulteel's sermon had been a talking point for some time after<sup>25</sup> as it concluded with this rousing warning: "The whole Gentile Church whether Romish or Reformed is under the sentence of 'excision' if she continue not in God's goodness. . . . Being shortly about to cut off the whole Gentile Church, God hath now for some few years past been constantly raising up his witnesses to the fact.

"God has a twofold purpose in thus acting. One is to gather out his own elect from the midst of the overthrow, the other is to leave those that shall be overthrown without any excuse."<sup>26</sup>

It will be seen therefore that Tiptaft was with a man who was very outspoken in his opinions, when he came to preach in the West Country. Bulteel actually was from a distinguished Plymouth family and there was consequently something of impropriety when the two men preached for about ten days in Plymouth, drawing crowds to listen to them in the open air to the dismay of scandalised Bishop and clergy. Leaving the town they travelled along the South Coast getting a mixed reception from the large numbers who gathered to hear them. Tiptaft in a letter to his sister and brother-in-law Deborah and William Keal described their progress saying that they preached twice at Teignmouth. "Many of God's dear people showed

us great kindness, and those who received us we called Jasons; for they certainly had to bear a cross. Mr. Synge of Buckeridge (sic) House, near Teignmouth, was very kind to us. He stood by us twice in the open air at Teignmouth. We took up our abode with him, and he sent us in his carriage to Totnes, and met us again at Exeter, and stood by us again. May the Lord reward him! He is a man of property, and cousin to your curate."<sup>27</sup>

If Synge was prepared to support the public preaching of vigorous critics of the Establishment like Bulteel and Tiptaft, both of whom expected, not without reason, soon to be in trouble with their bishops, clearly he was far from complacent about the condition of the Church of England. Doubtless, Bulteel told Synge about the current discontent among Evangelicals at Oxford. He probably gave his host some idea of the deep impression made on several of the younger men of the University by the visits of J. N. Darby. The testimony of this Irish clergyman, whom Synge probably knew already, had given fresh meaning to their doubts about the Establishment.<sup>28</sup> In any case, Darby had been invited by Bulteel's young friend, B. W. Newton to visit Plymouth, and Synge may have been in touch with a number of Christians there as well. We know for certain that Synge was well acquainted with a retired naval officer, Captain Percy Hall, who was in Plymouth at this time, and who like Bulteel, Darby and others, was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his position as a churchman, even though his father had been Dean of Christ Church and Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, and later Dean of Durham.<sup>29</sup> It was Hall who sent John Synge a pamphlet entitled *A Call to the Converted* written by one of the young Oxford Evangelicals, William George Lambert of Corpus Christi College.

Lambert is an elusive figure as far as biographical information is concerned. According to the *Alumni Oxonienses* he was the third son of Edmund Lambert of Slopeston Cottage, Devizes, Wilts.; he matriculated at the age of 17 in February 1822 from Wadham College, and was a scholar at Corpus Christi from 1822-1831, taking his BA in 1826 and MA in 1829. His death occurred in 1866. In addition to this we know that in March 1831 he and B. W. Newton were dining with Dr. John Hill after a meeting of the Society for the Conversion of the Jews at which J. N. Darby had been one of the speakers,<sup>30</sup> but by the beginning of 1832 Dr. Hill is lamenting that "Lambert my co-secretary in the Church Missionary Society has left it and the Church of England."<sup>31</sup> It was in July 1831 that Lambert published *A Call to the Converted* in which he advocated secession. If Newton's memory is reliable, "Bishop Sumner (of Winchester then) was Visitor of Corpus; he took proceedings and deprived Lambert of his Fellowship."<sup>32</sup> A conversation with Lambert was one of the main influences on Newton which led him to secede as well.<sup>33</sup>

John Synge was most interested in Lambert's tract and sympathised with certain of its objectives, namely a fuller experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit among believers, and a visible expression of spiritual unity. Nevertheless, he disagreed strongly with the proposed course of secession and produced a reply to Lambert's tract, which he printed at Teignmouth, presumably on his own press, and which was entitled: *Observations on "A Call to the Converted" as it relates to Members of the Church of England, addressed to Capt. P. Hall, R.N.*

We shall reserve discussion of these two tracts for a later stage, but we may here observe Synge's perspicacity in one interesting aspect. Nothing is known of Lambert's subsequent career apart from the following recollection of his erstwhile friend, B. W. Newton: "I lost sight of him: he married a lady who was a mystic. Some years afterwards I was at Bath and heard that he was there too. I called on him on a Sunday and found him reading the newspaper. I spoke of something that is in Ephesians etc. 'Oh,' he said, 'do you still believe like that? such as Dr. Hawker and that school? I have got beyond all that.'"<sup>34</sup> Whether Lambert's final condition was as unregenerate as Newton implied is open to question, but clearly his later views were very different from those in his tract.

In Synge's reply it is therefore somewhat striking to note one of the reasons he puts forward for not seceding: "Yet one more reason presents itself to my mind for not acting towards the Church as our dear brother would advise, I mean a review of the numbers who have done so, with highly spiritual views, and holding out great prospects of something better, but in the event have either made shipwreck of their faith, or at least failed in the proposed object of a regenerate church. . . ."<sup>35</sup> It would be very instructive to know whether Lambert turned to a mystical approach because he found the ideal of a pure church was unattainable.

#### *Glanmore Castle*

The preface to Synge's reply was dated 1st November 1831, and it was probably one of Synge's last concerns before he returned to Ireland, for in the same year his father had died, and in 1832 he took possession of Glanmore Castle. At the time he seems to have returned to Ireland out of duty rather than inclination. Writing to Miss Bridson, the family governess, in December 1831 he gave his reasons: "a demesne of 1600 acres in the midst of a property of 4000 will require attention and labour, and indeed, were I disposed to cast it all behind my back tomorrow, justice to others would oblige me for some time to labour at it."<sup>36</sup> His wife had died in 1830 and on his return to Ireland he married Frances Steele whose sister Emily was two years later to marry his brother Edward.

Glanmore Castle, which was built by John Synge's father, was described in 1837 by Samuel Lewis, the topographer, as "the splendid residence of J. Synge Esq. . . ., a handsome and spacious castellated mansion with embattled parapets, above which rises a lofty round tower, flanking the principal facade in the centre of which is a square gateway tower forming the chief entrance."<sup>37</sup> Today the place is only a shell and the fabric is totally derelict. An enormous monkey-puzzle tree stands close to the house in the chaotic tangle of undergrowth which prevents the visitor from seeing more than a fraction of the estate. The surroundings, however, are quite fantastic. A nineteenth century writer described Glanmore Castle very aptly when he referred to it as "standing on a green platform half-way up the mountain, and hanging over the "Devil's Glen", a deep, long, and rocky gorge, with its precipitous sides lined with trees, between which the river Vartry, rushing from its upper moorlands, flings itself down through a huge cleft rock into a deep, round pool, issuing from which, it traverses the glen in whirl and rapid on its way to the sea, a thing of beauty to the eye, and a song of music to the ear."<sup>38</sup>

John Synge was no less concerned about his tenants and their needs when he moved to Glanmore than when he had been at Roundwood. His great uncle Sir Francis Hutchinson had built a school in 1807 on the Glanmore Estate<sup>39</sup> and naturally Synge took great interest in the running of the school. According to Synge's accounts book, the schoolmaster in 1833 was given £20 a year with a house and one acre of land and the grass for one cow! His printing press was re-established near the Castle in the Glen in a building more recently known as "The grandmother's Tea House". Here his printer, Thomas Collins, (a deaf-mute taught by another follower of Pestalozzi, Dr. Orpus) produced for use in the local school, wall charts, which were to be held up before the whole class when there was a shortage of books.

It is hard in an age of comparative affluence to imagine either the grinding poverty that existed in Ireland at the time, or the simmering hatred that so often characterised the landlord and tenant relationship. At Glanmore, the Synge family had built a school and a church, but John Synge realised that more would be required than that. The first thing to be done was to find an agent who would be in full sympathy with his own Christian and humanitarian aims. Captain William Graeme Rhind was a retired naval officer who had entered Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, with the intention of gaining a degree and being ordained. He abandoned this plan and spent some years in active Christian work among the sailors in Plymouth during which time he probably met Synge in Devon. From 1828 to 1832 he was a secretary of the Reformation Society,

travelling to various parts of the country. He had been in touch with a number of the Evangelicals we have already mentioned, both at Plymouth and Oxford which he had visited in 1830.<sup>40</sup> In 1831 together with Nicholas Armstrong he resigned his position with the Society<sup>41</sup> and came to Glanmore at Synge's invitation.

If something was to be done about the tenants' poverty, it was essential that they should be provided with employment. By 1835 Rhind had seventy families occupied with knitting, spinning, and weaving on Synge's estates. On principle Rhind and his family mostly wore clothes made by the Glanmore tenants. In his own words: "When I tell them my little girl is wearing their home-knit stockings, one can see how happy it makes them. Thus seventy families are clothed by their own industry,—and often times I am made their savings bank, until their earnings reach seven or eight shillings, for a little pig, &c. Thus also the shops are aided; and the great wheel goes round easier and better; for although I do not *oblige them* to take their earnings out in clothing, yet nine tenths prefer it. If they are sick I visit them; and if in need I aid them; and—during the confinement of mothers of families, if my funds admit of it, I give them extra aid—not in money (this, as much as possible, I avoid,) but in flannels, baby clothes, &c."<sup>42</sup>

In addition to this scheme which, despite its paternalist overtones, was something very remarkable in its time, Rhind provided the tenants with medical help. "The kind Christian friend on whose estates I am residing, very handsomely allows me sufficient entirely to support a weekly general dispensary and also one daily call at my own house; to this all are welcome—his own tenants and all around." This included "a great many of 'Nobody's People' as they are emphatically called in this country, being either the tenants of little landlords, almost as poor as themselves, or cabin keepers by the roadside, who are neglected to a proverb; and of whom it may be said no man careth for me. I also vaccinate their children."<sup>43</sup>

Such concern for the physical needs of the poor gave Rhind an opening into their hearts. From Clorah cottage where he lived, at the mouth of the Devil's Glen, he regularly visited Roman Catholics and Protestants alike and his evangelistic work was accepted by people because they knew of his real concern for them. When he returned home he would frequently find a long queue of people waiting for medical attention, squatting on the ground outside his house. When someone suggested that such an intrusion was a nuisance, Rhind's reply was characteristic: "I consider it one of the principal ornaments of the place."<sup>44</sup> When the cholera was raging in 1838 Rhind was ready to comfort those dying, even though in doing so he was taking a very great risk.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to supporting Rhind in his work Syngé was initiating other schemes of development. There was an old slate quarry which he set out to exploit on a large scale. Welsh slate-cutters were employed. "Metal lines were laid to carry trucks for a mile or more to a small stream by which a watermill was built for dressing slates, flags and gravestones. The loaded trucks ran down by their own weight to an arch under the public road and with little or no assistance through it and down to the mill along the track of the disused Wicklow road". . . . The enterprise was a failure, though Syngé used his skilled quarry men to direct other ambitious projects on the estate, including the construction of the Upper Glen path, the River Avenue and a "great flight of 500 rustic steps winding up like a goat track among the trees on the steep side of the Glen." Edward Stephens attributes these schemes to Syngé's longing "to make the demesne of Glanmore a place for visitors to admire" and to his hope to make the quarry "profitable." Another motive is not considered by Stephens but would seem to be quite plausible. Such works provided employment for his tenants about whom he was genuinely concerned. Stephens refers to a "local tradition that in spite of their religious teaching, the Syngés were popular with the people in the district." Clearly he was ignorant of Rhind's work and has perhaps completely missed the humanitarian mainspring in John Syngé's schemes. In fact Syngé suffered for his efforts. He borrowed too heavily and although his sons refused to share in his plans he refused to abandon his projects. "In 1845 the inevitable crash came. Judgments were put into execution and the bailiffs were in the house when Syngé died."<sup>46</sup>

Evidently Syngé's building schemes were ambitious but to ignore his concern for his tenants and neighbours is to misunderstand the man. It is hard to avoid the thought that if more Irish landlords had been both resident and as interested in their tenantry as Syngé was—especially in the support that he gave to Rhind in his work—much of Ireland's misery might have been avoided. But the poor were not the only ones to benefit from his help.

#### *The Powerscourt Conferences*

When John Syngé was living there, Glanmore Castle became one of the spiritual centres of County Wicklow. "In the Parish of Nun's Cross" wrote Bishop Daly's biographer, "the clergy always assembled at Glanmore Castle where they were sure to have a large meeting, on an average about forty who were hospitably entertained by Mr. Syngé. These meetings were highly prized and felt by all who attended them to be very profitable."<sup>47</sup> Syngé, for whom the clergy had a high regard as "an earnest and religious man, and a ripe scholar",<sup>48</sup> was an influence of importance in the

Established Church. The high regard in which he was held by the clergy is apparent from the following inscription in the church at Nun's Cross: "This tablet is erected by a few clerical friends of the late John Synge Esq., of Glenmore, a man greatly beloved, of real humility and genuine faith. He truly walked with God, his citizenship in heaven and his affections fixed on things above. Thus affording to all who knew him the surest evidence of being found in his lot amongst the blessed at the coming of the Lord of glory for which he looked and waited daily. 1845."

And yet, as his tract in 1831 had shown, Synge was more than a churchman. In addition to his services to the Established Church, he saw his loyalty as extending to the wider communion of all the children of God. For this reason he was glad to share in the fellowship of the Brethren insofar as they would let him. If their meetings conflicted with his loyalty to the Established Church then he could not join them very frequently, but he was regularly present at their meetings at Powerscourt House, some thirty miles north of Glenmore.

In 1833, Henry Craik, the Hebrew scholar whom John Synge had employed at Buckridge House, received an invitation from Lady Powerscourt through his former employer, to attend the prophetic conference at Powerscourt together with his fellow pastor George Müller. On the 18th September they arrived in Dublin where they were met by Mr. Tims and on the following day John Synge arrived and took them to Glanmore Castle. We learn from Craik's *Diary* some details of life at Synge's home. On Friday the 20th after spending the first part of the day alone, Craik "expounded to the servants", and then spent some further time on his own. From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Synge, Hewit, Rhind (who was working on the Glanmore estates) Müller and Craik engaged in united prayer. They were to have re-assembled at 3 p.m. but this was prevented by the arrival of other people on their way to Powerscourt. In the evening Craik addressed the company "with very little power and much discomfort from the fourth Psalm".<sup>49</sup> On Saturday, he remained alone until 11 a.m. when again the company gathered for three hours of united prayer after which they dined. From 4 to 7 p.m. they were again engaged in prayer "for Ireland, not forgetting Bristol, etc." After tea Craik spent some time with Müller praying for their congregations and families back in Bristol. On Sunday they broke bread from 10 a.m. to 12 and in the afternoon Craik appears to have been on his own again.<sup>50</sup>

One of the visitors who arrived on Friday afternoon was B. W. Newton, whose letter written on Monday morning to his mother has survived. "I just write a very few lines to say that we arrived in Ireland in safety and well on Friday morning—and are now about

38 miles from Dublin at Glenmore Castle, Mr. John Synge's—our party consisting of J. L. Harris, Miss Trelawny, H. Soltau, my dearest H[annah] and myself. In a half hour's time we set out for Powerscourt. J. N. Darby is now with us and Müller and Craik from Bristol. . . . The entrance of the Devil's Glen, which is in Mr. Synge's ground and is considered one of the most striking spots in Ireland, is just opposite the window at which I am sitting."<sup>51</sup>

That so many leading Brethren should have met at Synge's home before travelling to Powerscourt indicates how far he was considered as one of them. The contemporary accounts are at variance as to whether it was in 1832 or 1833 that Robert Daly withdrew from the chairmanship of the Powerscourt conferences on account of the "anti-church" views expressed by many Brethren. It is clear however, that on Daly's withdrawal, Synge took his place and continued as chairman for several years. Stoney's account is emphatic on this point. He refers, if Neatby's history is reliable, to a conference in 1838: "Mr. John Synge was in the chair. He called on each to speak in turn on a given subject. Mr. Darby spoke last, and often for hours, touching on all that had been previously said. Mr. Wigram sat next to him. Captain Hall, Mr. George Curzon, Sir Alexander Campbell, Mr. Bellett, Mr. Thomas Mansell, Mr. Mahon, Mr. Edward Synge were there. There were clergymen present and Irvingites."<sup>52</sup> This was long after most Brethren had severed their connexions with the Established Church, and yet one who had not done this was respected sufficiently to be their chairman, apparently as late as 1838.

### *The Problem of Secession*

In fact, Synge had made his position very clear as early as 1831 when he replied to Lambert's *Call to the Converted*, and it is to a consideration of these pamphlets that we must now devote some attention.<sup>53</sup>

Lambert's tract is perhaps the first English publication to contain all the emphases that later became characteristic of those known as Plymouth Brethren. It reflects for example the pre-occupation of the time with the possibility of miracles and tongue speaking, but it takes the matter much further than a simple pentecostalism and deduces certain ecclesiastical implications:

We are at present, much taken up with considering how far the church hath grounds for expecting the resuscitation of miraculous powers. . . . Nothing can be plainer than that the Scripture affords not the least warrant for confining them to one age more than to another, but they are made to depend on faith, and faith only, and that the design and use of them is to glorify Christ risen: but then, brethren, it is equally plain to me that



that faith must be embodied in a pure and spiritual church, a church formed and drawn together *solely* by the power of the principles above described, *solely*, that is, by the constraining power of the Spirit. . . . The Spirit of holiness, before he displays to the world a repetition of Pentecostal miracles, will prefer displaying the more astonishing, the more glorious, and the more lovely miracle of stubborn, human wills and lifeless human hearts brought into gracious, sweet and fervent union with the God of heaven and with each other (p. 10).

The role of the Holy Spirit is of crucial importance in Lambert's thesis because he sees the acceptance of the Holy Spirit's presence as rendering ecclesiastical forms obsolete:

Greatly, greatly, brethren, have they erred and fallen into the snare of the devil, who have contended hotly and pertinaciously for a form of ecclesiastical government and have put it forward as a distinct question. What hath been the consequence? They have drawn aside attention from what is essential to what is circumstantial, and have begun at the superstructure instead of the basis . . . (p. 13).

I consider one system just as worthless as another; in this system, whosoever values the glory of Christ . . . is bound to act on one of two alternatives; either the system must become a spiritual one, or he must renounce the system, and that not without a decided protest against it as a false one. He must give himself to the Lord, Brethren: I have done it myself, as far as it was in my power, and . . . have had clearer, surer, and more abundant experiences of his favour, than I ever had in my life before; and while he is with me, I will not care though the whole world be against me (p. 23).

Throughout, the writer indicates that, as he understands it, the Church must be composed of people who have spiritual experience, and yet he finds such experience a rare commodity:

What do we know of being filled with the Spirit, of rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, of the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us, of being made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; of teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; of our speech being always with grace, seasoned with salt and ministering grace to the hearers? . . . (pp. 29-30).

and this inexperience derives from the attempt to preserve the right doctrine in ecclesiastical documents instead of in the hearts of the members of a *pure* church:

For God never designed articles and confessions and canons to be the 'pillar and ground of truth': no, he designed the hearts

of those in whom 'the truth' should dwell, the hearts of whom it should 'set free,' to be its better shrine, its living receptacle (pp. 40-41).

Indeed, in a pure church, Lambert maintains, the Spirit of God will direct all worship, and the contemplation of such a church leads the writer into an ecstasy of enthusiasm:

The Spirit rejoices to display his manifold power in diversity of gifts ministries and operations, dividing to every man severally as he will; if then we belong to any such system, so ordered that it prevents the Spirit thus profusely and variously putting himself forth; if for example, one man only is authorized to pray or otherwise edify the flock, and that perhaps only in a musty, fusty written form, or as much in the flesh, though *not* in such a form, whereas it is the mind of the Spirit that in the assemblies of the Saints (O beautiful and glorious assemblies, in the midst whereof standeth the Lord Jesus and his attentive angels) one should have a psalm, one a doctrine, one a tongue, one a revelation, and one an interpretation, and so all edify each other; if, I say, we are hedged in a system that precludes all this and damnably putteth God's glory under a bushel, let us by all means pray that we may with due despatch be tumbled out of it (pp. 53-54).

One suspects that Lambert, of whose spiritual development we know virtually nothing, had been unable to find a 'company of believers' with whom he could share his experience of conversion and who might have established him in his faith, but nevertheless his optimism is unwavering:

I will not despair. Even now the Church is rising from the ground on which she hath been lying; even now she stirreth herself up, and is beginning to recognize the high privileges and endowments of which, by the purchase and investiture of her Lord she was once seized; she sees them, I say, and wonders why she hath been so long content to want them. Yea she is altogether as a woman in travail, that laboureth to be delivered. And there are scribes, well instructed unto the kingdom, although in some points suffered still to err, who are giving richer and fuller apprehensions of Christ's person, glory and offices, than have for a long while been rife in the world. Above all a light hath fallen from heaven upon the page of prophecy, and thousands have been called to the hope of the revelation of the day of the Lord (p. 58).

Lambert's study of prophecy however, is to be no curious speculation for the biblical antiquarian. Rather it will be an aid to the piety and purity of the Church, as it is 'a doctrine to cut body and soul asunder . . . to snatch us out of the flesh and elevate us above the world and to sustain us in that elevation.' (p. 66) But

even as early as 1831 certain hermeneutical tendencies were already apparent which later were to become the stock-in-trade of Brethren dispensationalism. Lambert claims that Matthew xiv. 45-47 implies the existence of a well-ordered and well-governed church (such as 'no-one at present can show me') at the 'time our Lord comes into the air to receive his saints, a time quite distinct from his coming down to the Jews on earth' (pp. 62-63).

Along with Lambert's ebullient eschatological hopes he displays a characteristic concern about unity and the sin of denominationalism:

What mean these cursed names of division, Churchman, Quaker, Presbyterian? I know they are music in the ears of hell, and carnal man may be indifferent to them; but I know that one who is a disciple of the Lord Jesus should indignantly reject and disclaim any other title than that of 'saint' (pp. 67-68).

Surely, the writer continues, the revived church which he has been envisaging cannot fail to be united, but how will it be ordered? The answer is so simple that it would seem to be almost naive if we did not know that it was a solution that the Brethren were later to adopt as their own:

Why are there such scanty notices of church government and church order in the books of the New Testament, whereas those of the Law abound in the most minute and particular directions? Because the fulness of the Spirit's presence made them altogether unnecessary and *because that very omission was designed to be a method of forcing us to trust completely and implicitly in the Spirit's presence and the Spirit's teaching* (pp. 69-70).

On such a note of confidence *A Call to the Converted* is concluded. It manifests all the optimism of a young man of twenty-six and reflects the hopes of many earnest Christians at that time. It warrants such lengthy quotation partly because it appears to be completely unknown,<sup>54</sup> and also because it is remarkable that so many 'Brethren' attitudes are to be found so early in a single piece of writing. Even greater interest, however, attaches for our purposes to John Synge's reply, which enshrines both a more generous and more realistic approach to the church of the day, and also a 'Brethren' attitude almost forgotten in the course of time.

#### *Synge's Reply*

Broadly speaking, John Synge approved of Lambert's quest for a fuller experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit, but rejected his proposed course of secession:

Greatly indeed does my soul bless God for the precious truths it [Lambert's tract] unfolds, in calling the attention of the poor

scattered sheep of Christ to look for more ONENESS and more LOVE; in pointing out the necessity we have for a Reformation in our believing notions of the promises of the Holy Ghost, and in shewing so forcibly that *that* Reformation must be begun in love and unity among the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ, if we would look for the full renewal of Pentecostal power. . . . I find no one trace among us of our being yet collectively partakers of that blessed Spirit, for where he dwells there will be abounding love to Christ, boldness for Christ, and affectionate unity among his members and therefore still farther are we from enjoying any of his outward power and gifts. In all these particulars my heart fully goes along with what our dear brother has set forth, with so much more perspicuity and power than I am capable of doing (pp. 1, 3).

But in spite of this agreement, Synge differs from Lambert over: what he says concerning the necessity of both coming out of the Established Church and testifying against (i.e. abusing) it, as a preliminary step to obtaining that unity and love among the brethren of Christ, in the absence of which and necessity for which I altogether agree with him. . . . It does appear to me that 'a church so strictly spiritual' as our friend speaks of, is not so easily attainable, or indeed not attainable at all 'until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, &c.' Is. xxxii. 15. (pp. 3, 4).

The basic ground on which Synge defends the Established Church is that it stands:

in a similar position to awakened Christians in our day, to that in which the Temple service stood to the Apostles *after* the day of Pentecost. . . . Let those that would meet me on the ground that the Established Church stands *higher* than the Temple service, remember that the latter stood on the direct enactment of God, and let those who would place it *lower* because of its corruptions, say, do they desire to speak worse of it than our Lord spoke of the Temple. . . . (pp. 4, 5).

Synge implores his readers to remember what a positive blessing the National Establishment

has been and is to our land, to have throughout it such pipes and conduits for the Word of God to run in, as are our Churches, while they set before the people who attend there so large a portion of that precious WORD in their services, in the course of a year, so much more, be it remembered, than any other denomination of Christians pretends to do; and which the Minister is not at liberty to select according to his own particular doctrines. . . . Deeply do I deplore that a man no sooner has his eyes open to desire a greater measure of spiritual food, than a

National Church is able to supply him with, than he thinks it necessary to turn his back on the Church altogether (pp. 6, 7).

Synge's argument here is based on the claim that the services of the Establishment are sound in form and teaching. He rebukes Lambert for the 'levity' of his reference to 'musty, fusty written forms.' In support of his own position he quotes rather effectively from another tract which Captain Hall had apparently sent to him:

It is curious that to these very '*written forms*' the other hostile pamphlet which you sent me, at the same time bears the following honourable testimony: 'For a CHURCH *strictly spiritual*, NO FORM, AS ALL ALLOW, COULD BE MORE EXPRESSIVE, NONE MORE SOUND (p. 3).

The quotation was from a tract of which no copy apparently has survived. It was entitled *A Protest against the National Establishment of England* and was written by George V. Wigram, another member of the group of radical evangelicals at Oxford who was later to be a leader among the Brethren.

The object of Synge's tract however, was to do more than merely defend the Establishment which he regarded as '*a store-fold rather than as a fattening-fold.*' (p. 8) He wants to go some way with Lambert in his suggestions but without seceding, and consequently his enthusiasm is for the prospect of an end to denominational division:

I do indeed thankfully hail the anticipations [in Lambert's tract] of some closer union in the wisdom and love of our Good Shepherd, through the power of the Holy Ghost, than any we are acquainted with (p. 9).

But together with this, Synge makes a counter-proposal. He suggests that without jettisoning the sound doctrine of the Establishment, people of like spirit

agreeing on the necessity for some closer fellowship among the children of God than public assemblies admit of . . . invite those, out of *every system*, who feel with them on these points, to assemble as often as circumstances will allow, in some convenient place, forgetting the distinguishing prominences which have kept them asunder; being brought together by the constraining love of Christ, and agreed that whatever unity of opinion *may be*, unity of spirit *must be* the work of the Spirit and not of the reasoning powers of man (p. 11).

Synge does not apparently envisage in this tract the breaking of bread taking place, but rather sees this as an occasion for meditation and prayer, the study of the prophetic scriptures and the investigation of such thorny questions as 'how far God's ancient people, the Jews, are interwoven with the hopes of the Church' (p. 12).

In conclusion Synge touches upon the most difficult aspect of his proposition. He believes that such meetings as he has proposed may be arranged 'without forsaking the National Church, without denouncing the National Church, or without attending meetings during her appointed hours of prayer.' (p. 13) Nevertheless he realizes that men who study together in this way may find themselves constrained to 'go by two and two into the villages, and teach and preach Jesus Christ, in the house, or out of the house, as may be convenient.' (p. 14) It is precisely here that the difficulty arises, and though he does not mention by name the preachers who were his guests at Buckridge a few months earlier, the fact that Bulteel's licence was withdrawn by the Bishop of Oxford after his West Country preaching tour is clearly what Synge has in mind when he imagines the possible consequences:

A minister for instance, on reading our dear brother's book, may be stirred up to commence such a meeting in his parish, or may see it to be his duty to join one, begun by others; and Canon law may be brought to bear upon him, to the depriving him of his Cure. How earnestly ought we to pray, that instead of denouncing the whole system of the Church, as many have done, when thus assailed for more zeal than carnal superiors will admit of, such a one should have previously counted the cost, and being prepared for such an issue, meet it and receive it in the full spirit of the Apostle's injunction [in I Peter ii. 20] (p. 15).

How much better, suggests Synge, would the testimony of a minister in this position be if, when suspended from his ministry by the authorities, he

take his seat among the congregation regularly while he continues at other times to teach and to preach Jesus Christ, and to join with the waiting disciples in his neighbourhood who are giving themselves to prayer and the word (p. 15).

The importance of this pamphlet which of necessity we have quoted at some length, lies in the fact that its author retained, as we have seen, his connexions with the Brethren movement for many years after he wrote it. His pamphlet reflects a point of view which, though never in the majority, was quite as 'primitive' as other early Brethren attitudes. Several points emerge which we must consider.

The fact that neither Synge nor Lambert emphasise the place of the Lord's Supper in their meetings, suggests that Newton's recollections were reliable when he said that Breaking of Bread began at Plymouth rather casually.<sup>55</sup>

Secondly, Synge's use of the parallel of temple worship with the position of the Established Church, throws light on the development

of a more elaborate dispensationalism which later became characteristic among Brethren. If the brother who, like Synge, was reluctant to secede, used the argument that the disciples continued to worship in the Temple services, clearly it would be convenient for the separatist to claim that the church was not truly formed until the disciples had cast off all connexion with Judaism.<sup>56</sup> That the dispensationalist issue was already developing is apparent from the distinction that Lambert makes between the Jewish remnant and the Church, and from the fact that Synge considers the question of the relation of the Jews to the Church to be a suitable subject for further Bible study.

Most important however, is the fact that in Synge's pamphlet we have a reasoned apologia for 'Brethren' principles *without* secession. Some years ago in the pages of CBRF Journal a similar thesis was argued by my brother Mr. Philip Stunt and many Brethren were shocked by its apparent novelty. It will not be taken, I trust, as a breach of fraternal piety, if I observe that John Synge's proposals were far more consistent than those of Mr. Stunt who suggested that the Anglican pattern of liturgy would make a good basis for Brethren worship. Synge's idea was more logical as it maintained that Brethren worship should be supplementary to the Anglican services, and for that reason it would be generically different. If 'extra-establishment' meetings were to take the same liturgical form as Anglican services they would be redundant.

Synge's point of view was not in such a minority as later developments may have led us to think. In 1833 Darby seems to have been fairly sympathetic to Synge's argument as he expresses in a letter (April 30th) his anxiety about the proposed change at Limerick whereby breaking of bread will coincide with services of the Establishment—thus preventing people from attending both.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, as Synge realized, the most difficult issue was for the minister like Bulteel whose gift and whose ministry was rejected by the Establishment. Would he have the grace to be subject to unspiritual authorities in the Church? It was easier for Synge who was a layman, and the fact that many Brethren were in or intending to take Holy Orders, explains the predominance of the separatist spirit.

It is also worth recalling that some separatist Brethren found their position faulty as time went on and grew more open in their approach, drawing nearer to Synge's own ideal. One such was Charles Hargrove who in 1835 had abandoned his clerical position in the Established Church, mainly under Darby's influence, but who later became far more kindly disposed to the Anglican communion. If he had not seceded in the somewhat bitter disillusion of

earlier difficulty, one suspects that he would have taken Synge's position. In fact the restraints of ecclesiastical authority upon his ministry<sup>58</sup> led him to secede because he was not prepared to submit and, in Synge's words, 'take his seat in the congregation regularly' while continuing 'at other times to teach and preach Jesus Christ.' By 1846 however, his outlook had changed considerably as the following incident demonstrates.

At one of the earliest meetings of the Evangelical Alliance when the constitution was being discussed, there was considerable surprise among many of the participants who had assumed that Plymouth Brethren would have nothing to do with the project, when Charles Hargrove announced that not only was he in full sympathy with the Alliance but also that he was a Plymouth Brother:

I feel just as much in communion with them as ever; but I do not feel so exclusively in communion with the Plymouth Brethren, as not to be just as much in communion with any brother in this room. Furthermore, anything God has given me to minister, I feel as free to minister in another place, as in any building of the Plymouth Brethren. . . . When I heard of this Alliance, my whole heart went out; and when I see the Basis, I see, permit me to say, (I hope I do not offend) that the grand principle of this Alliance is the principle of the Plymouth Brethren.<sup>95</sup>

Hargrove's statement on this occasion is a striking recovery of Synge's original vision which in many ways did envisage the Brethren as a sort of Evangelical Alliance before that organization had even been thought of. The question that we cannot answer is whether Synge was influenced at all by the Moravians whose ecclesiology was so similar and whose Pietist meetings so resembled the sort of supplementary meetings that Synge was proposing.

The life of John Synge is worthy of our consideration for several reasons. First we are reminded that there was from the start a non-secessionist element in Brethren thinking. His ecclesiastical position was well argued and the Brethren were impoverished when his point of view disappeared from among them. There is still a good case for arranging services so that they will not clash with those of other Christians. A second point that Synge's career illustrates is that he was far from the socially conservative man of tradition that the early Brethren are often assumed to have been. In his concern for the social welfare of his tenants Synge was setting an example which, if it had been followed by other Irish landlords, might have changed the history of Ireland. Evidently there were among the early Brethren social as well as ecclesiastical radicals.

Synge's interest in new educational ideas was perhaps still more radical as he risked the wrath of critics who said he was threatening



the established order of society. Yet his commitment to child-centred education seems to have been deep and genuine. Its extent is still further illustrated in his relationship with his children. In contrast to so many families, most of Synge's children seem to have accepted rather than rebelled against their father's spiritual attitudes. In the case of his son Francis, Synge's ecclesiastical position seems to have narrowed somewhat. Instead of retaining his father's links with the Establishment, Francis regularly attended the Brethren meeting at Kilfee schoolhouse, but this may have been due to the influence of his wife Editha (née Truell) whose second husband was an Exclusive Plymouth Brother. Two other sons of John Synge were missionaries—one in the Aran islands and the other in the Australian bush. The piety of the youngest son, John Hatch Synge, is attested by his own son, the dramatist John Millington Synge, in his accounts of his childhood.<sup>60</sup> All this suggests a good relationship between the two generations. The testimony of godly children is an eloquent one, and all the indications are that John Synge's radicalism in social and ecclesiastical matters was accompanied by love and gentleness at home.

## NOTES

- 1 K. C. Synge, *The Family of Synge or Sing*, (London 1937); A. Carpenter (ed.) *My Uncle John, Edward Stephens's Life of J. M. Synge*, (Oxford 1974) hereafter cited as *My Uncle John*.
- 2 G. D. Burtchaeli and T. U. Sadleir (ed.), *Alumni Dublinenses*, (Dublin 1935); J. Foster (ed.), *Alumni Oxonienses 1715-1886* (London 1887).
- 3 *A Biographical Sketch of the struggles of Pestalozzi to establish his system of education*, compiled and translated chiefly from his own works by an Irish Traveller [i.e. John Synge] (Dublin 1815). Also information from Mrs. Lily M. Stephens of Dublin, the widow of John Synge's great grandson, Edward M. Stephens.
- 4 *Ibid.* p. v.
- 5 Kate Silber, *Pestalozzi the Man and his Work*, (London 1965) p. 144.
- 6 *Ibid.* p. 147.
- 7 Trinity College Dublin Library Nos. 22Y 36; 22Y 36 No. 2; Papyrus Case E; Press 9 372 No. 5.
- 8 The letters are in the Zentralbibliothek in Zurich, MSS. *Pestalozzi* 55a/365.
- 9 *The Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine* VII (1828) p. 337.
- 10 Letter 10th Dec. 1818 in Zurich Zentralbibliothek.
- 11 *Samuel Gobat Bishop of Jerusalem: A Biographical Sketch* drawn chiefly from his own journals, (London 1884) p. 41.
- 12 J. Cart, *Histoire du mouvement religieux et ecclésiastique dans le Canton de Vaud pendant la première moitié du dix-neuvième siècle* (Lausanne 1870-80) i. 120ff., 174ff. J. P. Greaves had a younger brother R. Greaves, Vicar of Deddington, Oxon (1822-37), who was an enthusiastic evangelical and a friend of both B. W. Newton and John Hill, Vice-principal of St. Edmund Hall. There are several references to him in Hill's Diary of which the following are perhaps the most interesting: '19 July 1823 Mr. Greaves and Mr. Meyers breakfasted with us . . . we found Dr. Mayow of whom we had heard mention made yesterday as having spent 3 years in Pestalozzi's establishment and having now set up a school of 30 boys at Epsom on that plan. Filled all the time with conversation on the subject of education.' '23 Sept. 1823 Mr. Greaves the elder brother of Mr. R. Greaves of Deddington called on his way to Town and brought with him some iron rods to make mathematical figures for John and George and a little book for the nursery. He has been for several years in Switzerland assisting Mr. Pestalozzi and entered very earnestly into the merits of his system.' Bodleian Library, *St. Edmund Hall MSS* 67/4 pp. 4b, 32b.
- 13 Letter to the writer from Mrs. Lily Stephens, Apr. 9, 1969.
- 14 *My Uncle John*, p. 8. The reference however, is misleading as there was 'no gathering of the Brethren' in Devon in 1827.
- 15 J. E. Ryland, *Memoirs of Dr. John Kitto*, (Edinburgh 1856) pp. 142-50, 153, 160, 189, 203, 231-32, 236.
- 16 *Ibid.* p. 289.
- 17 Mr. Coad suggests that this was only a temporary position, as Synge's main residence was at Glanmore, F. R. Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, (Exeter 1968) p. 36. In fact, Glanmore only came to John Synge on his father's death in 1831—an event that he could not have forseen when he moved to Devon in 1827. Thus Craik's appointment may not have been quite so insecure as it seems in retrospect.
- 18 *Passages from the Diary and Letters of Henry Craik of Bristol*, ed. W. E. Taylor (London 1866) pp. 99ff.

- 19 Ibid. p. 109.
- 20 Ibid. p. 116.
- 21 Published in London 1831.
- 22 Later published by Bagsters, London 1864, see Craik's *Diary* p. 124.
- 23 *A Narrative of some of the Lord's dealings with George Müller*, written by Himself, (London 1881) i. 45.
- 24 H. B. Bulteel, *A Sermon on 1 Corinthians 2. 12 preached before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's on Sunday Feb. 6, 1831*, (Oxford 1831), p. 37.
- 25 M. R. D. Foot (ed.) *The Gladstone Diaries* (Oxford 1968) i. 343-46.
- 26 Bulteel, op. cit. pp. 51-52.
- 27 J. H. Philpot (ed.), *The Seceders 1829-1869*, (London 1931) i. p. 168.
- 28 For the current malaise at Oxford see T. C. F. Stunt, 'John Henry Newman and the Evangelicals,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* xxi (Jan. 1970). 65-74.
- 29 W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, (London 1965) pp. 38-39.
- 30 *Diary of Dr. John Hill* (See note 12) viii p. 36a.
- 31 Ibid. ix. p. 3b.
- 32 Newton's reminiscences are preserved in the Fry Collection, Newport, I.O.W. See *Large MS. Book* p. 279. There is however, no documentary evidence for Lambert's deprivation in the Hampshire Record Office, Winchester. The following have been consulted: (i) The visitation documents of Corpus Christi (E/8/C); (ii) The Wolvesey MSS. relating to Corpus Christi (A/9/A1); (iii) Bishop Sumner's Register 1824-63; (iv) The Day Book of the Bishop's Legal Secretary 1827-63.
- 33 Fry Collection, *Small MS. Book* 4 p. 118, 11 p. 148.
- 34 Fry Collection, *Large MS. Book* p. 279.
- 35 John Synge, *Observations on 'A Call to the Converted' as it relates to Members of the Church of England, addressed to Capt. P. Hall, R.N.* (Teignmouth 1831) p. 8.
- 36 *My Uncle John*, p. 9.
- 37 Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, (London 1837) ii. p. 144. In the 19th century Glanmore was often spelt Glenmore.
- 38 R. S. Brooke, *Recollections of the Irish Church*, (London 1877) p. 33.
- 39 Letter from Mrs. Lily Stephens to Dr. Kate Silber of Edinburgh, written in 1958.
- 40 For Rhind's earlier life see J. B. I[sbell], *Faithful unto Death, a Memoir of William Graeme Rhind*, (London 1863). The records of Sidney Sussex College indicate that Rhind only matriculated and took no exams. For Rhind's visit to Oxford see Hill's *Diary* viii. pp. 2a-b.
- 41 For the circumstances of Rhind's resignation from the Reformation Society see *Annual Report of the British Society for promoting the religious principles of the Reformation* (London 1832) pp. 25-9.
- 42 *Memoir of Rhind*, p. 41.
- 43 Ibid. p. 42.
- 44 Ibid. p. 43.
- 45 Ibid. pp. 50-51.
- 46 *My Uncle John*, pp. 9-12.
- 47 Mrs. H. Madden, *Memoir of the late Right Rev. Robert Daly DD.* (Dublin 1875) p. 148.

- 48 R. S. Brooke, *Recollections of the Irish Church*, (London 1877) p. 33. cf. p. 34 where Syngé is described as a 'skilled Hebraist.'
- 49 Craik's *Diary*, p. 167.
- 50 Ibid. p. 168.
- 51 Fry Collection, Letter from B. W. Newton at Glenmore, Wicklow to his mother, 23rd September 1833. Punctuation supplied.
- 52 Quoted in W. B. Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren*, (London 1901) p. 39. In the pamphlet, *Interesting Reminiscences of the Early History of 'Brethren' with Letters from J. G. Bellett and others*, (London n.d.) the same description is printed but with various differences. Clearly the account was circulating in MS. for some time and copying resulted in inaccuracies. On the basis of Bengel's textual principle, (*proclivi lectioni praestat ardua*) Neatby's version is the more reliable. The only important difference is that *Interesting Reminiscences* gives 183—instead of 1838.
- 53 William George Lambert, *A Call to the Converted*, (Oxford 1831). The only copy known to me is that in the British Library.
- 54 It is not mentioned in either H. H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren*, (London 1967) or F. R. Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* (Exeter 1968).
- 55 Fry Collection, *Small MS. Book 4* p. 114, *Large MS. Book* p. 254.
- 56 It had long been a mystery to the present writer as to why the Scofield Bible had to wait until Acts 15. 13 before finding 'dispensationally the most important passage in the New Testament.' The simplest explanation is that before that point, the Editors felt that the early Christians had been far too involved with Jewish worship. In fact this was the sort of dispensationalism that Newton opposed, complaining, in a letter to Harris, Soltau and Batten in 1845 that people were teaching that 'the Pentecostal saints were not in church-standing but were formed for Godly citizenship in the earth.' (Fry Collection, Letter of March 30, 1845). Such a view, of course, was the only answer to Syngé's argument in favour of involvement with the Established Church.
- 57 *Letters of J. N. Darby* (London n.d., latest edition) i. p. 18.
- 58 H. H. Rowdon, *Origins of the Brethren*, p. 102.
- 59 *The Evangelical Alliance: Proceedings of the Conference held at Freemasons' Hall, London from Aug. 19th to Sept. 2nd 1846*, (London 1847) p. 149.
- 60 For details of Syngé's children, see *My Uncle John*, pp. 12-28.

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