An Introduction to 'Theological Anthropology'

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What lies behind the idea of producing a theological anthropology? Why is it so important that there should be a distinctively theological anthropology? Anthropology concerns itself with understanding human experience. Theology is concerned with God. God and humanity – should not the two be left in quite separate compartments? Some would wish to leave 'God' in a remote 'ivory tower'. They want to get on with the business of human life without having to be bothered with a 'God' who is, for them, a complete irrelevance. Others pride themselves on their theological orthodoxy while showing little interest in getting to grips with the many – sided complexities of human experience. There is a real need for an anthropology, which adopts a distinctively theological point of view. Understanding human experience – this is not something which theologians can safely leave to others. It is vitally important for everyone. It concerns a better understanding of ourselves. We may write as Theologians, who, affirming their faith in God, must speak as those who have their feet upon this earth. The Anthropological vantage-point is undoubtedly 'from below'. This must, however, be accompanied by the bold affirmation that the Word of God has come to us 'from above'. Refusing to 'put the cart before the horse', to get so bogged down in this-worldly concerns, Christian Theology must take care not to create God in its own image as a prelude to forgetting about him altogether.

Any attempt to write a *theological* anthropology is a bold undertaking. Ours is a time when nothing can be taken for granted. Many, who write about the meaning of human experience, would be entirely dismissive of the very idea of God. If ever there was a time when Christians ought to 'give a reason' for the faith which they hold (1 Peter 3:15), this is it. Perhaps in previous generations, more could be taken for granted. This is certainly not the case now. The present generation has been described in different ways: postchristian, postmodern. Biblical descriptions of moral and spiritual chaos are particularly apt. With little understanding of and respect for the biblical teaching that 'the Lord is King', 'everyone does what is right in his own eyes' (Judges 21:25). In a time when many will listen only to what they 'want to hear', there is a widespread 'turning away from the truth' (2 Timothy 4:3-4) Writing a theological anthropology requires courage – the courage to say things that few other commentators on human life are saying, the courage to make statements which are unlikely to be well received within the academic community. This essay on theological anthropology aims at being an academic piece of work, touching upon many different dimensions of human experience. It does, however, adopt a starting- point which would be deemed unpopular within the wider academic community. We affirm the reality of divine revelation. To the ancient question, 'Is there any word from the Lord?' (Jeremiah 37:17), we answer, 'Yes. God has spoken'. This does not involve replacing anthropology with theology. This is an anthropology, written from a theological perspective. We write from the standpoint of the Christian faith. We do not speak of 'an unknown God' (Acts 17:23), a 'God' whose character is shrouded in vagueness, a 'God' of whom we can say very little. Human experience is understood in the light of the God of revelation, the God of redemption. We confess the Christian faith: God has made himself known in Jesus Christ, his Son, our Saviour. Enquiring about the meaning of human experience, we direct attention to God, our Creator and Saviour. Enquiring further about God, we deepen our understanding of human experience.

The aim of the present discussion is to provide the theological foundations on which further discussion needs to be built. Fundamental to our whole approach is the conviction that humanity has been created in the image of God. For those who affirm the authority of Scripture – as we do – the search for a true understanding of human experience involves paying close attention to the teaching of the Bible.

Direct biblical references to this idea of 'the image of God' are, in fact, quite infrequent. Before commenting on the meaning of this phrase, we need to set it within its full biblical context, the ongoing story of God's dealings with humanity. The Bible tells a story. It is the greatest story ever told. It is a story which begins in eternity, a story which will continue throughout eternity. It is a story which gives depth to human experience. It is a story which gives hope to human experience. It does not begin with sinful humanity. It begins with the eternal God, our Creator. It does not end with sinful humanity. Beyond all that we see and know here on earth, there is the eternal God and the fulfilment of his purpose of redemption. This is the divine backcloth to the human story. We are only part of the story, his story, the story of God. This is the story, told by God himself in Scripture, his own Word. God himself has told his story so that humanity might understand its own story. Within his story, there is our story, the story of what he intended us to be in creation, the story of what we have become through sin, the story of what he still intends us to become through salvation. Human experience, with all its complexities and ambiguities, is viewed from the standpoint of the biblical story, which is both the story of sin and the story of glory, the glory of divine salvation.

The biblical story is the story of *creation, sin* and *salvation.* This is the story which informs our theological understanding of human experience.

Creation

The story begins with creation. The Bible teaches us that God is our Creator, and we are his creation. Highlighting the relationship between Creator and creature, the Bible raises both the anthropological question – 'What is man?' – and the theological question – 'Who is God?'. The anthropological question is asked in relation to God, and the theological question is asked in relation to humanity.

When, in Psalm 8:4, the Psalmist asks the question, 'What is man that you are mindful of him . . .that you care for him', he is not asking the anthropological question in the way that the contemporary researcher might ask it. He is not giving the kind of answers that we might be looking for. He is not providing a description of various characteristics of human life. He is bowing before God in worship, praising him for his continuing love. Finding the question, 'what is man . . .?', within a psalm of praise to the God of constant love, serves to remind us that our deepest significance lies not in ourselves but in God our Creator. Grappling with all the complications and ambiguities of human experience, we look beyond all that, and we see the God who cares, the God to whom we matter.

Micah asks the theological question – 'Who is God?'. Like the psalmist with his 'anthropological' question, the prophet is worshipping God, thanking him for his love. He does not offer a comprehensive description of God. He does not attempt to say everything that could possibly be said about God. He does not enquire about a detached, remote 'God', whose existence is of little interest to us. He worships the God who cares for us. He asks the question, 'Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives . . .transgression . . .?.' This is not only a question. It is a testimony, a joyous celebration of the God who 'delight(s) to show mercy' and 'have compassion on us' (7:18-19). From both the psalmist's 'anthropological' question and the prophet's theological question, we learn that God cares for us. He cares enough to forgive our sins. This is the great declaration made by the prophet as he asks the question of God.

When the two questions – 'What is man?' and 'Who is God?' – are asked in close connection with each other, we see that theology and anthropology are not, as some would suggest, worlds apart from each other. They are, in fact, very closely related to each other. The anthropological question – understanding ourselves – raises the question of God, 'Can human experience be adequately understood without reference to God?'. Viewing humanity in relation to God involves seeing everything in a quite different light – the light of his love.

The continuing love of God expresses his faithfulness. He does not abandon his creation. While we may learn much about the relation between God, the Creator, and humanity, his creation, from the constancy of God's love, we should also go back to the beginning, to the biblical statement that God created humanity in his own image (Genesis 1:26-27). Implicit within this statement is this dual perspective – seeking to understand human experience raises the question of God, and thinking about God helps us to understand ourselves. The question, 'What does it mean to say that humanity has been created in God's image?', is, at one and the same time, both theological and anthropological. It would be one-sided to say that it is primarily a theological question or to suggest that it is essentially an anthropological question. It is both – theological and anthropological. This is the question of theological anthropology. This is the basic question with which we are concerned: What does it mean to say that humanity has been created in God's image?

In this phrase, 'created in God's image', there are two fundamental distinctions being drawn – between humanity and the animals (of humanity alone is this description given, 'created in God's image'), between God and humanity (we have been created in God's image, but we are not God). Immediately after the statement concerning creation in God's image there is the further thought of dominion: 'Let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground' (v.26). Commenting on the relationship between creation and dominion, R. Davidson writes, 'Just as God is sovereign over all creation, including man, so man reflects this sovereignty. He has sovereignty delegated to him.' As a consequence of this 'delegated sovereignty', humanity ' stands in a position of responsibility before God'.[1] The unbreakable connection between 'delegated sovereignty' and 'responsibility before God' is succinctly expressed by D. Bonhoeffer: 'There is no dominion without serving God.'[2]

Sin and Salvation

Saying that humanity has been created in God's image is not all that has to be said in a theological anthropology. We must also speak of sin and salvation. The creature rebels against

the Creator. The human will asserts itself over against the divine will. This leads to separation from the Creator. By his own sinful choice, the creature places himself at a distance from the Creator. Creation in the image of God is followed by the fall from God, brought about by sin (Genesis 3). The fall was followed by the flood (Genesis 6-8), the judgement of God upon humanity, whom he had created and by whom he had been 'grieved' and 'filled with pain' (Genesis 6:6-7). In view of the fall of humanity into sin and the consequent judgement of God, the question must be asked, 'How does this affect our view of humanity as created in God's image?' After the fall and the flood, we have, in Genesis 9:6, the statement: 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.' Here, ethical teaching is grounded in the idea that humanity has been created in the image of God. There is no suggestion here that – consequent to the fall and the flood – humanity is no longer 'in the image of God'. Further study of Scripture provides no explicit statement to the effect that 'the image of God', has been removed from humanity.

To highlight the phrase, 'created in the image of God', would be to present a lop-sided theological anthropology. God is our Creator, and we are his creation. Alongside this, we must say something else – we are sinners, and God is our Saviour. The fact of human sin must be taken taken into account. This fact also entails our need of divine salvation. This theological anthropology, seeks to draw attention to both creation and salvation. Any attempt to drive a wedge between the two results in a loss of the fine biblical balance which it is so important to maintain.

We are caught in the middle, between what we once were and what we will yet be – 'in the middle, coming from the beginning and going towards the end'.[3] We are '*Adam*, mankind, the human race',[4] created in God's image, but we are also Adam the sinner (Romans 5:12-21). This is not, however, the end of the human story. Realistic about the increase of sin, the Christian faith proclaims, with faith, the increase of grace, leading to the reign of grace, reigning 'through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 5: 20-21). As well as emphasizing the human privilege – created in the image of God – we also emphasize the human responsibility of coming in faith to Jesus Christ and, thus, becoming a 'new creation' in him (2 Corinthians 5:17.

The human situation, in the beginning, was quite different from our present situation – 'Adam knows neither what is good nor what is evil'.[5] Adam walked with God, without shame (Genesis 2:25). He did not know 'evil' as an inescapable fact of his everyday life. He did not know 'good' as a kind of 'elusive butterfly' which always seemed to be just out of his reach. Like Adam, we still stand before God. We live out our lives in the presence of the living God. We, however, no longer stand before him without shame. There is no way of returning to the situation of Adam before his fall. It cannot be done. We are simply not in a position to remove ourselves to this paradise 'beyond good and evil'.[6] We are 'separated from the life of God' (Ephesians 4:18). Estranged from God, alienated from him, our situation would seem to be utterly hopeless. Theological anthropology, must reckon with the harsh realities of this bleak and unpromising situation. If, however, our theological anthropology is to be truly grounded in the Christian faith, we must also reckon with something else – 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Given the apparent hopelessness of the human situation – apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ -, it becomes exceedingly difficult to define what is meant by 'the image of God in humanity'. It is difficult to be optimistic about the outcome of the search for some aspect of human nature, which can be directly identified with 'the image of God'. In search of *The True Image*, P.E. Hughes highlights several features of human experience, which bear the imprint of God's image in humanity – personality, spirituality, rationality morality, authority, creativity. He takes account of the effect of sin – disintegration, before moving on to explore the effect of salvation – reintegration.[7] Sin's disintegrating effect on our lives means that we can catch only fleeting glimpses of what our Creator originally intended us to be. Despite human sin, God persists in his purpose of restoration. Through salvation in Christ, there is reintegration. Whatever may be said about God's original creation theological anthropology must take account of the radical effect of sin on human life and place its major emphasis on the transforming effect of Jesus Christ. God's original intention is rediscovered through Christ.

Apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, humanity's relationship to God is one of estrangement rather than fellowship. This relationship characterized by sin, guilt and condemnation, can be reversed, transformed into communion with God, only by divine grace. The whole of human life is lived in relation to God – 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). This relationship is expressed in the thought that 'he is not far from each one of us'. This is not, however, a comforting thought. It does not encourage complacency. This God, who is 'not far from each one of us', relates to humanity through a word of warning concerning ' a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed', a command 'to repent' and an invitation to 'seek . . .and find him' (Acts 17:27-31). When the warning is heeded, the command is obeyed and the invitation is acted upon, the relationship with God is no longer one of estrangement. It becomes the relationship for which we were created – 'man is made for fellowship and communion with God'.[8]

A theological anthropology, which views humanity's relationship to God in its various dimensions, will speak of both sin and salvation, revolt against God and fellowship with God. In every aspect of human life, there is ambiguity. There are the actualities of human life, deeply disturbed by sin, and there are the potentialities of human life, graciously called to salvation. While touching upon a wide range of different aspects of human experience, theological anthropology is not concerned with any one particular aspect in isolation from the rest of our life. Its concern is with the entirety of human existence – 'the whole man is created in God's image'.[9]

Divine Calling, Human Response.

In the entirety of our human life, there is the divine calling – 'it is man's fundamental vocation to be God's child'. It is a divine calling which looks for human response. Realism

acknowledges that, as a 'consequence of sin', the 'pure child-like relationship with God has been broken'. Faith, affirming the persistence of God's love, insists that the calling remains – 'man's fundamental vocation to be God's child . . .is not lost – not even by sin, because it rests upon God's will and is, therefore, founded upon the creation'.[10] The words of Genesis 3:9, 'the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"', do not pronounce a word of judgement in which God abandons sinful humanity. This is the call of mercy. God in grace, is calling the sinner back to himself. There is a critical examination: 'Where are you?' implies the searching question, 'What have you done?'. There is also a compassionate appeal: 'Where are you?' carries the further thought of 'Will you not return to me?'. This is the divine calling, looking for the human response.

Theological anthropology draws attention to God's call for a response in the whole of life. This is not primarily an academic exercise, an intellectual debate with theology's rivals. The main concern is not to challenge alternative interpretations of human experience. The current intellectual climate must be taken into account. This generation has been described as postmodernist. There has been so much change. It almost seems that the only constant feature is change. Nothing remains the same. Everything changes. This seems to be the chief characteristic of our postmodern age. Morally and spiritually, there seems to be nothing but chaos, wherever we look. It appears that 'anything goes' has become the watchword of this generation. It seems that the only thing to be taken for granted is that there are no certainties. Many people live as though nothing really matters. Questions about belief and behaviour are dismissed without any discussion. The approach of Christian theology is not exactly 'state of the art'. It belongs to a bygone age. It has no place within a postmodernist society. To adopt a specifically theological starting-point in our study of human experience is to run counter to the prevalent trend of our time. Theological anthropology calls in question the adequacy of every approach which excludes God from the attempt to make sense of our life. Many protest that to insist on a theological outlook is to hold back progress. The postmodernist age has brought great progress in many areas of life. Nevertheless, it must be asked whether there has been progress in the moral and spiritual areas of life. Christian theology persists in its commitment to understanding human life in the light of the God 'in whom we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28)

While taking account of the postmodernist context within which we write, our chief intention is to be constructive rather than polemical. The goal is to construct a theological anthropology rather than launching an attack on contemporary society. Some intellectual debate is unavoidable if there is to be a genuinely contemporary approach. The understanding we seek to obtain is not, however, intellectual. There is a futility of thinking, a darkening of the understanding, an ignorance which has more to do with the hardening of the heart than any lack of intellectual capacity (Ephesians 4:17-18). At the heart of the theological understanding of human experience, there is the biblical principle: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge' (Proverbs 1:7). Studying anthropologiy within a theological context, does not involve presenting a system of doctrine, to which the reader is required to give intellectual assent. Taking account of the reality of the living God, in our thinking about human experience, will always involve more than a merely intellectual response. Speaking of the divine call for a response which affects the whole of life, H. Berkhof describes 'man' as 'a being who is made to encounter God, to respond to his word'.[11] Understanding humanity in terms of response to God need not imply that we do, in fact, always respond to him in faith and obedience. Very often our response to him is rather different. Often the sinful way of unbelief and disobedience is chosen. Whatever the nature of our response to God, it will always touch upon much more than the intellectual aspect of our life.

The human response to God is shaped by sin and salvation. Sin draws us away from God: through salvation God draws us back to himself. Theological anthropology, seeks to take account of both the sin, which has so profoundly affected our experience of what it means to be 'created in the image of God', and the glorious destiny, toward which God is still calling humanity through the eternal salvation he has provided in Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks with stark realism – 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' – and with glorious hope – 'and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus' (Romans 3:23-24). What a glorious beginning there was for humanity – 'created in the image of God'. Now, sadly, there needs to be the honest confession – 'the glory has departed' (1 Samuel 4:21). Humanity's glory has been tarnished by sin. The restoration of the glory – this is the purpose of God's salvation.

Theological anthropology looks at human experience with a view to catching glimpses of God's glory, the glory of his purpose for humanity. Here, we echo the aim of P. Berger: 'who suggests that theological thought seek out what might be called *signals of transcendence* within the empirically given situation'.[12] Where God is excluded from anthropology everything is viewed in terms of the horizontal dimension. In theological anthropology, we are looking also at the vertical dimension, the reality of God in human experience. This divine reality is not located within a single, clearly defined and limited part of human life. Rather. we see the whole of life being shaped by the fact that humanity is the creation – albeit fallen – of God, the creation which he has not abandoned, the creation which he purposes to redeem. It is with this wide-ranging view of the reality of God within human experience that we address ourselves to the subject of theological anthropology. This is not a theology which is deeply interested in God but only slightly interested in the life of humanity. We are interested in both, the Creator and the creation, the Redeemer and the redeemed.

This dual perspective – the Creator and the creation, the Redeemer and the redeemed – is found in the opening sentences of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: 'Our wisdom . . .consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves . . .it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes, and gives birth to the other . . .no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves'.[13] This knowledge of God is much more than a purely intellectual knowledge. It is a life-changing knowledge, a knowledge which results in a life which is lived for God's glory. Explor-

ing the 'many ties' which connect 'our knowledge of God and of ourselves', does not involve a restriction of interest to specifically Christian experience of God. There is a relationship between 'man' and God, even where this relationship has been perverted by sin, even where 'man' resents the fact that his whole life is lived in relation to God. Acknowledging that its field of study is the whole range of human experience, theological anthropology reiterates the challenging words of Calvin, words which invite a response, in which human life is redirected towards God: 'man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God'.[14]

Calvin may have written over four centuries ago, yet his insights are still very relevant to the construction of a contemporary theological anthropology. Human life remains unfulfilled apart from God. Our understanding of what it means to be human remains incomplete without the perspective offered by the description, 'created in the image of God'. Seeking a 'true self-knowledge', we must also 'contemplate the face of God'. Understanding what it means to be 'created in the image of God', involves learning what God is like. This, according to the Christian faith, involves turning our attention to Jesus Christ. When Christ was asked, 'Lord, show us the Father', he replied, 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:8-9). Christian understanding of God does not end with his act of creation. God has not created the world, and then abandoned it. He has not created humanity in his own image, and then forgotten about us. Some suggest that our fleeting glimpses of God – so few and far between – are hardly enough to encourage trust in a God who loves us. We would, however, suggest that our awareness of God's presence is so slight, precisely because we are so easily bogged down within the situation of sinful humanity that we are inclined to forget that there is a 'rock' for our faith (Psalm 40:1-3), the rock of our creation – created in the image of God – the rock of our salvation – saved for a glorious destiny (1 John 3:1-2). Theological anthropology involves learning what God is like as well as learning what we ourselves are like.

Learning what God is like, we catch glimpses of his glory. This glory is revealed in Jesus Christ (John 1:14). It is a glory which transforms those who keep looking to Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). There are many things which can be said about the glory of God. Above all, and particularly in relation to humanity, the glory of his love may be highlighted. His act of creation is an act of love. Expounding the idea, 'God the Creator', K. Barth emphasizes, 'Creation is grace . . .The *ground* of creation is God's grace.'[15] From the very beginning of God's dealings with humanity, there is love – he loves us, we are loved by him. If the world is to be more truly and more fully, 'The theatre of His glory',[16] there must be a restoration of the glory of his love. A theological anthropology, which is truly grounded in Christ, will not be content to speak only of the love of God, revealed in his act of creation. It will speak also of the glory of the cross (Galatians 6:14). and the transforming power of Christ's love, a love which is at work in us, reproducing itself in us as 'the fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5:22). This is the restoration of God's glory. It is the glory of love – God's own love – finding expression in human life (1 John 4:6). Theological anthropology seeks to highlight the different areas of life, where God is at work, restoring his glory within his creation. The aim is not to speculate about what humanity might have been apart from and prior to the entrance of sin. Rather, it is to draw attention to what humanity can become through the saving grace of God, in Jesus Christ.

The restoration of the divine glory involves the transformation of human life: 'we . . . are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord' (2 Corinthians 3:18). This transformation of human life – personal and social – is produced when, through salvation in Jesus Christ, God's process of restoring the original relationship between the Creator and his creation is set in motion

Personal Transformation

God is concerned with personal transformation. God is not a superficial observer of human experience: 'Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart' (1 Samuel 16:7). He looks at human life with a view to transforming it. This transformation is produced by the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not, first of all, a change in the outward appearance of things. It is a change of heart – 'outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day' (2 Corinthians 4:16). There are externally observable aspects of this transformation. It begins, however, with the inner transformation – receiving the 'new life' which comes from 'his Spirit who lives in you' (Romans 6:4; 8:11). We are called 'to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness' (Ephesians 4:24). This is not about a tinkering with this or that aspect of human life. It is the reproduction of the divine character within his human creation. This personal transformation involves the understanding, the emotions, and the will. These are closely connected aspects of our transformation by God. Every tendency to pull them apart must be resisted.

The Understanding

Transformation of human life involves the renewal of the understanding. Emphasizing the importance of the mind, this theological anthropology looks at human experience from the standpoint of biblical revelation. This standpoint differs from that of mystical spirituality, which proclaims a deep, religious experience of God as 'Wholly Other', a profound awareness of the Divine, which cannot be articulated. We believe that there is a divine revelation, expressed in human words. This is why we make it our goal to 'speak . . .in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words' (1 Corinthians 2:13).

The starting-point is not that of phenomenonology: 'an examination of man's consciousness'.[17] With D.G. Bloesch, in his analysis of 'Two Types of Spirituality' – 'evangelical devotion' and 'mystical spirituality', we stress that 'our faith is mediated through but not derived from experience'.[18] Thus, its approach differs from that of phenomenology which 'attempts to describe' and has no interest in the prescriptive question concerning 'how people ought to believe'.[19]

Similarly, theological anthropology does not begin from a starting-point of supposed 'neutrality'. It is based on this

theological position: we believe in divine revelation, affirming that the God who has expressed himself, in Jesus Christ, as the living Word, has given to us the Bible, his written Word, so that, by the instruction of our minds, we may understand our human experience, more fully and more truly, in the light of him who is both our Creator and our Redeemer. With the Psalmist, we testify, 'The entrance of your words gives light', and we pray, 'Give me understanding according to your word' (Psalm 119:130,169).

The Emotions

The renewal of the understanding (Romans 12:2) needs to be held in balance with the transforming of the emotions, and they need to be viewed in close connection with the surrender of the will. The difference between a theological anthropology and an anthropology which excludes God is much more than a different world-view. There is also the matter of where the 'heart' is (Matthew 6:21). A truly theological anthropology will lead the 'heart' to the Lord. If God is excluded, the 'heart' will remain with the world. The response of the 'heart', where it is real, is always much more than a purely emotional response. It is the response of the whole person. The whole of life is given over to the Lord. An anthropology, which is genuinely theological, will involve much more than a purely academic consideration of human experience. There will be a real commitment to seeing every part of life in relation to God: 'we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ' (2 Corinthinians 10:5).

The understanding and the emotions belong together. Here, we share P.Tillich's insistence on the vital connection between the two. He emphasizes that 'receiving knowledge . . .includes the emotional element'. Tillich contrasts 'receiving knowledge' with 'controlling knowledge' which 'tries to detach itself as much as possible'. He maintains that there cannot be real ''understanding' without emotional participation'. He points out that 'nothing can be received cognitively without emotion'. Describing the place of the emotions in our understanding, he writes, 'Emotion is the vehicle for receiving cognition. But the vehicle is far from making the content itself emotional. The content is rational, something to be verified, to be looked at with critical caution.'[20] In line with this emphasis on the unity of the understanding and the emotions, we seek, in theological anthropology, to draw attention to the divine call for the response of the whole person.

The Will

As well as the understanding and the emotions, an important part of our response to God involves the act of the will. There may be understanding with the mind and a stirring of the emotions without a full response to God. The message has been understood with the mind. It has stirred the emotions. It must be acted upon. Discussing the meaning of 'the much-abused word 'experience', Tillich writes, 'Experience unites insight into action.'[21] If our experience of God is to be more than the giving of intellectual assent and more than the stirring of our emotions, there needs to be action. This action is vitally related to the understanding and the emotions. There can be no acting upon a message that is not understoood. There will be no acting upon a message that has not stirred the emotions deeply. In the act of the will, we build upon the understanding of the mind and the stirring of the emotions.

The act of the will does not stand alone. It is not an act of blind obedience. It is informed by the understanding and it receives vitality from the emotions. The act of the will brings completeness to the human response to God. The understanding can be reduced to mere intellectual assent. The emotions can be no more than pious feelings. The surrender of the will sets God's transforming power fully into action. We are lifted out of passivity. Building upon breadth of understanding and depth of emotion, we choose to do God's will, and thus the full process of personal transformation is set in motion. The Bible emphasizes the importance of human choices – 'Choose this day whom you will serve' (Joshua 24:15). The human situation is vividly described in the words of Joel 3:14 – 'Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision'. In an age where responsibility is not a very popular idea, the Bible insists that human beings are responsible for the choices they make. They are commanded to do God's will (Acts17:30). We will be held responsible if we go our own way rather than God's way.

Social Transformation

As well as personal transformation, there is also social transformation. Human life is life in community. We are called to serve the wider community. This aspect of our response to God cannot be ignored.

It is an important sociological maxim that 'no man is an island'. Our life is lived in relation to others. From the very outset, our life is lived in community. A newborn child, abandoned, is a child left to die. From the beginning, we need one another. Our life is not to be lived in isolation. We are a people in community. An important aspect of our life in community is highlighted in the biblical account of our creation: 'God created man in his own image, . . .male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27). This life in community is expanded further in v.28. For our first parents, their life in community was not a blissful existence, shared with nobody else and nothing else. Their life in community was shared with the rest of God's creation, and it was to be shared with the next generation of human beings, the product of their own obedience to the divine command – 'Be fruitful and increase in number'. Theological anthropology, must give attention to those aspects of human life, which can be described in terms of 'life in community'.

This 'life in community' is a life of privileged responsibility. There is the privilege of being created in the image of God and the responsibility of living as those who bear the divine image. It is important that the right balance between privilege and responsibility is maintained. The Westminster Shorter Catechism provides a helpful combination of privilege and responsibility. In its statement, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever' it emphasizes the privilege of enjoying God and the responsibility of glorifying him. Maintaining the true balance between the two is most important for all our human relations – marriage, the family

and life in the wider society.

Theological anthropology takes the broad view of things. Its concern is not simply to develop a 'theology' which can then be applied to community life within the clearly prescribed limits of 'the church'. It is concerned with the whole of life, looking at it from a theological point of view. 'Life in community' involves more than human relationships. It involves humanity's relationship with the whole of creation. This divine calling – 'to rule over' the rest of God's creation (Genesis 1:26,28) – is to be exercised with a sense of both privilege and responsibility. There is to be a humble acknowledgement of God's gift, and a caring commitment to exercise our God-given stewardship responsibly.

The principles involved in this responsible stewardship are precisely those which undergird this whole exercise in theological anthropology. Scripture says that 'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it' (Psalm 24:1). It also says that 'The highest heavens belong to the Lord but the earth he has given to man' (Psalm 115:16). These two insights are taken together, concentrating on God without forgetting about his creation, focusing on humanity and its world without forgetting about God. The approach is genuinely anthropological. There is a real concern with understanding human experience, and not simply producing a 'theology' which remains rather detached from life on earth. The approach is distinctively theological. Humanity is not the sole focus of attention. We see ourselves as created by God and created for God.

Created by God and created for God, humanity is called by God and called to him. Invited to come to him, invited to serve him – This is the human calling. We cannot serve God without first coming to him. In serving God, we do not turn away from worshipping him. Our service is grounded in worship. Worshipping God, we are equipped for serving him. Serving God is not merely a theological action. It is a way of life, which is full of anthropological significance. A real commitment to serving God will affect the way in which we understand ourselves. It will transform our way of living here on earth. Serving God may be grounded in worshipping him, but it does not mean floating around in a kind of 'head in the clouds' existence. It will mean involvement in a very human world. In so many different ways, it will mean serving very ordinary people. Nevertheless, this service will not be 'ordinary'. It will be a special kind of service, the service of God, given in the name of the Lord, carried out with the help of the Lord, and pursued with the object of restoring his glory to his world.

Thus, theological anthropology, aims to make a distinctive contribution to modern discussion concerning the life of humanity. We speak as those who -'in the temple' (our own particular field of theological study) – have caught a glimpse of the glory of God. In response to the divine commission – 'Go and tell this people', – we write so that our readers might see more clearly that 'the whole earth is full of his glory'. We are aware that many would dismiss us as 'touched'. For them, any reference to God is to be excluded from the outset. We, who believe in the importance of a theological foundation for anthropological understanding, freely acknowledge that we are 'touched': 'he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips'' (Isaiah 6:1-9). Some assert that there is no place for God within the study of anthropology. We do not see ourselves as 'introducing' God into anthropological study. We hold that he is there already. Over against the idea that God has been created in humanity's own image, we affirm that it is humanity which has been created in God's own image. Theological anthropology is offered as an act of service – serving God by seeking to give him his rightful place in his world and serving humanity by directing attention to the God of hope who is the hope of the world. Calling attention to this aspect of *hope* is a most important feature of this theological anthropology. In a world in which there seem to be so few signs of hope, it is essential that theologians point the way to the rediscovery of hope. The restoration of God's glory has already begun – 'we . . .are being transformed into his likeness, with ever-increasing glory' (2 Corinthians 3:18) -,but it will not be completed in this mortal life. The Christian faith does not begin and end with humanity. It begins with God – 'In the beginning, God . . .' (Genesis 1:1). He is our hope for the future, our hope for eternity – 'He is the true God and eternal life' (1 John 5:20). This is the broad background of theological anthropology – 'from beginning to end, God'. All of life is lived in the presence of God. This is our hope, our 'hope of glory' (Colossians 1:27), our 'goal', 'the prize for which God has called (us) heavenward in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 3:14).

Christian faith insists that our earthly present is not the last word on human experience. In the present, we see 'the presence of the future'.[22] In the present, we see the unfolding of God's eternal kingdom. The eternal destiny, the glorious future, calls us on. We are to be a people of hope, but we are not to be easy-going optimists who take lightly 'the radical nature of evil'. Believing that 'God is the Lord of history', we also recognize that 'there are hostile elements, opposing forces which seek to frustrate God's rule'.[23] Together with an ultimate optimism concerning the final fulfilment of God's eternal purpose, we speak with realism concerning the present realities of our human situation. Our dual perspective – human sin, divine salvation – has been well expressed in the words of H.Butt : 'Everything is hopeless but God. Everything is hopeful because of God . . .we and our societies are nothing compared with God . . . we and our world are beloved of God.'[24]

This perspective on hope is useful to us as we seek to hold together the different concerns of theology and anthropology. We do not concern ourselves so exclusively with God that we lose interest in what is happening here on earth. We do not, on the other hand, allow ourselves to get so caught up in the intricate complexities of anthropological study that we lose sight of the God who gives to our human experience its true meaning, purpose and direction. Butt's approach forms a good basis for work which is both deeply theological and genuinely anthropological. His words are well worth repeating:

> Transcendent hope and . . .immanent hope . . .must cohere . . .in order to intersect and overcome despair – the loss of expectation, both expectation for God's eternal Kingdom and expectation for the improvement of this world . . .transcendent expectation and immanent expectation form one complete Christian hope. The first says, turn to God because the human prospect is so bleak; the second says, the human prospect can be

changed because of God.[25]

For the full revelation of the divine glory, we await his coming kingdom. This does not prevent us from seeking glimpses of his glory here-and-now. Indeed, the hope of his glorious kingdom encourages us to seek such glimpses of glory. Our experience of his glory can never be more than partial. Nevertheless, we believe that it is a real anticipation of the glory, which will be fully unveiled at the return of Jesus Christ.

Focusing attention on this future hope does not involve diverting attention away from our present life. There is a vital connection between the two. The relevance of our future hope for this present life has been well brought out by the German theologians, W.Pannenberg and J. Moltmann. Their comments are well worth noting here.

Stressing that 'We are not called to choose between concern for the Kingdom and concern for society', Pannenberg insists that 'The Church . . ..must take the present social and political forms with greatest seriousness and appraise them in light of the coming Kingdom of God'. Emphasizing that God should not be viewed in terms of 'isolated transcendency', he points to 'God's intention for the transformation of the world through his rule', highlighting the church's role: 'By witnessing to the future fulfilment of humanity in God's Kingdom, the Church helps to stir the imagination for social action'.[26]

Thinking of the 'Church as constituted by its mission to the world in the service of the coming universal Kingdom of God', Moltmann views our future hope as 'not an escapist dream, but a critical, motivating perspective on the present'.[27] Pointing out that 'The theologian is not concerned merely to supply a different *interpretation* of the world, of history and of human nature, but to *transform* them in expectation of a divine transformation', he maintains that 'Christian theology "proves" itself . . . in opening up future prospects for reality and initiating movements towards these'.[28] Seeking to 'relate the expectation of an ultimate future to hopeful activity in the present', he highlights the 'function' of Christian 'hope' in 'liberat(ing) people's thinking from the constraints of existing conditions', 'arousing hope and obedience' and 'produc(ing) anticipations of (the Kingdom of God) in history'.[29]

It should be observed, at this stage, that the insights of Pannenberg and Moltmann, while they are most valuable, ought to be used with caution. It has been argued that, in some of Moltmann's writings, there is a 'danger . . .of promoting a revolutionary political attitude in too simplistic a way'.[30] Aware of this kind of danger, Pannenberg stresses that 'we should not be carried away into saying that the Church must always be revolutionary'.[31] In our theological anthropology, we will confront many complex issues. We must not lose sight of the nature of our Christian faith. It involves allegiance to Jesus Christ, but it may never be identified with unqualified allegiance to any political system. Whatever may be said about contemporary applications of Christian hope, it must be stressed that our future expectation centres on a real return of Christ in the coming kingdom of God. Our present experience of God can be no more than a 'poor reflection' of 'the glory that will be revealed in us' – 'when he appears we shall be like him' (1 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 8:18; 1 John 3:2). Our world will be a new world. Its renewal will be greater than we could ever imagine. It will be 'a new heaven and a new earth' (Revelation 21:1).

An approach which is at one at one and the same time, both theological and anthropological, will seek to avoid two pitfalls. There must be no attempt to speak purely 'from above'. This would be an authoritarian imposition of theology upon anthropology. There must be no movement towards developing a 'from below' method which severely restricts the freedom of theology to comment on human experience. This would be an over reaction to the danger of theological authoritarianism. Speaking from the standpoint of a God who has fully involved himself with his creation (John 1:14). theological anthropology emphasizes that human life remains unfulfilled apart from this God. From the standpoint of God, there is an impulse which moves him towards humanity – the impulse of his love. From the human standpoint, there is a pull towards God – the pull of his love. God's love propels him into action. His initiative towards humanity is the initiative of love. God's love calls humanity back to himself. Even in all the many demands of a world which often seems to go on from day-to-day, year to year, and even generation to generation, with little thought of God, still – there is the call of God's love, the 'still, small voice', the 'gentle whisper' of God's voice (1 Kings 19:12).

In all the complexity and diversity of theological anthropology, there is one voice which must be heard above all others, the voice of God. This theological anthropology will not be speaking of God all of the time. Much of what is said will be very largely descriptive of human experience. God will not be 'hauled in' at every opportunity. He is there at every point. At no point is God absent. We live in his presence, even when we refuse to acknowledge him. Theological anthropology is intended to be a real echo of the ancient prophets and apostles – there is a word from the Lord, a 'living and enduring word of God' which modern men and women, in all their sophistication, still ignore at their peril, a 'living and enduring word of God' which still points the way forward, the way of true progress for the human race (1 Peter 1:23).

This grounding of our thinking and writing in divine revelation is, very important. It is vital that strong theological foundations are laid so that the reader, grappling with a wide range of anthropological material, will not miss the point of it all. A succinct and helpful summary of the essential conviction, from which the present theological anthropology proceeds, may be found in Augustine's well-known prayer:

> You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless
> until they rest in you.[32]

Notes

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12 *A Rumour of Angels* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969), p.70.
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16 ibid., p.58 (citing Calvin).
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27 R.J.Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, Basingstoke, 1987), pp.5,13.
28 *Theology of Hope*, pp.84,89,94. (cited in Bauckham, op. cit., pp.14,27).
29 Bauckham, op. cit., pp. 13, 43, 45.
30 Bauckham, op. cit., p.43 (citing F. Kerstiens, 'The Theology of Hope in Germany Today', *Concilium 9/6* (1970), p.110.
31 Pannenberg, op cit., p.85.
32 *Confessions* I.i.1.