

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 5

Volume 5 • Number 2 • October 1981

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews selected from publications
worldwide for an international readership,
interpreting the Christian faith for contemporary
living.*

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where there are good things in abundance ([3:17–18](#)). The interpretation of this passage is not certain, but it seems to look forward to the Christian Church and to the end times, of which the New Testament tells us.

[Micah 4:1–4](#): In the “latter days” the mountain of the Lord will be established as a place of peace and of obedience to God’s commands.

The “mountain of the Lord”, Mount Zion is described by Isaiah too as a place of peace, righteousness and fertility ([2:2–5](#), [35:1–10](#)) in a new heaven and earth ([65:17–25](#)). This is linked with the prophecy of Christ’s future rule on earth in [11:1–9](#). Elsewhere Isaiah writes in a similar way, but seems to be describing a much more imminent salvation at God’s hand ([41:17–20](#), [43:18–20](#)). Although we probably cannot treat the prophets’ visions of the new heaven and earth as literal descriptions, they show us that God’s salvation was seen as involving man’s environment as well as man himself.

4. What Can We Learn?

What lessons about the use of land, environment and resources can be learned for our country? For the Christian Church?

Our country has a complicated economic system which produces a great variety of goods and services to meet our needs and to sell abroad to cover the cost of our imports. Life in biblical times was much simpler, but are the principles outlined under Question 1 still relevant? Consider how they might apply to contemporary issues, for example:

- the distribution of wealth, land and property—is it just?
- the poor, the homeless—who is responsible for meeting their needs?
- the aims and motives of society and governments—are they the right ones?
- the quality of the environment in city, town and country—who is responsible?
- Government action—town planning, compulsory purchase of land and buildings, nationalization of land and other resources: are they needed? What should they achieve?
- attitudes to work and what we are paid for it.
- attitudes to money and what it can buy.

What relevance does the Old Testament teaching on these environmental and resource issues have for our lives—as individuals, as groups of Christians? Does the Church—as a society within society—have a duty to include this teaching in its message?

A Candle in Barbed Wire: Hope for Prisoners of Conscience

Gwen Graham

Reprinted from Zadok Centre News, December 1980, with permission

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of a continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were; *any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind ...*

We who are followers of Jesus Christ have experienced with John Donne, His call to caring involvement in mankind, His call to be neighbour to those in need; His call to speak for those who cannot speak themselves.

Over and over again we see this practical care demonstrated and exhorted in the Gospels. It is epitomized in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, who rescued a wounded and helpless member of an enemy race; his need was a sufficient call for the Samaritan to act in love to establish justice and restore a human life.

This caring involvement is also the basis of Amnesty International, whose area of concern is particularly for those locked away in prisons, forgotten, tortured, deprived ... for no other reason than that they have stood firm in their beliefs. The aims of Amnesty are three-fold:

- (i) To work for the release of prisoners of conscience—men, women and even children—who are jailed for their political or religious beliefs or racial origins, and who have neither advocated nor taken part in violence;
- (ii) To seek fair trials for all political prisoners;
- (iii) To work against torture and the death penalty for all people.

The organization is non-sectarian, non-political and impartial, seeking to combat violations of human rights within their mandate, wherever they occur.

Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, should perhaps be able, above all others, to empathize with the prisoner of conscience because in this world every Christian is potentially such a person. Our patriotism is qualified as we have only one absolute loyalty, for, as Peter, himself a prisoner of conscience for some time, affirmed, "we must obey God rather than men".

Many Christians, in countries as disparate as Romania and South Korea, China and Bolivia, already suffer imprisonment and torture for their unswerving loyalty to Jesus Christ. Of course, many nonChristians are also prisoners of conscience, and Amnesty International provides an opportunity for us to extend practical help both to fellow believers and to others punished for exercising their right to express their beliefs in a peaceful manner.

In the years that I have worked in the Australian Amnesty movement I have increasingly found it to be a very practical channel to express Christian discipleship, especially in terms of the words in [Luke 4:18, 19](#). "He hath sent me to announce that captives shall be released and the blind shall see, that the downtrodden shall be freed from their oppressors."

It is so easy as we read the newspapers with the headlines on jailings, tortures and executions throughout the world, to feel overwhelmed and helpless. I have found in Amnesty that ordinary people can carry out effective action to free people, stop torture and bring hope and light into many dark places in the world.

I had early proof of the effectiveness of Amnesty when I was a new AI member. A missionary told me of the indefinite detention without trial in Sabah of a young Christian Chinese economist, Mr. Lie, who had won a seat as an independent in the legislative assembly. The ruling party had promptly jailed him to simplify government unity.

A Sabahan student in Perth told me that when he had returned home on holidays no one would discuss the prisoner. "It is best to forget", they said—because involvement might bring suspicion upon them. I contacted the international headquarters of AI in London and research into his case was initiated, and he was subsequently "adopted" as a prisoner of conscience. Later he was chosen as one of the three "Prisoners of the month", and in the

following weeks many thousands of letters from AI members all over the world poured in to the office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, each one courteously requesting the release of Mr. Lie.

The violation of human rights in this outer province could not now be ignored, and this prisoner of conscience was released the following month. Amnesty exists to make sure the world does not forget those locked away at the government's whim. My opportunity to share in the release of Mr. Lie was as close as my pen and paper. The prisoner of the month scheme continues to be one of AI's most effective weapons.

In 1961, a British lawyer, Peter Benenson, read in the paper of two students sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in Portugal for raising their glasses in a toast to freedom. His indignation at this, and the many other cases he had discovered of the repression of dissent, led to a campaign to draw world attention to the plight of prisoners of conscience. This campaign was launched with an article by Benenson in the London Observer, "The Forgotten Prisoners", and from this developed Amnesty International.

A young Czechoslovakian serving an 11-year sentence for her noncommunist stand told me later what this meant to her. She said: "In prison you do not live by bread, but by hope." News of this new organization seeped even into this high security jail, and a hope shone in the cells which nothing could destroy because now these persecuted people knew they would no longer be forgotten.

Now Amnesty has developed into a vast humanitarian body with over 200,000 members in over 100 countries. Basic to Amnesty's work for prisoners of conscience have been the "adoption groups"—now over 2280 of them—who are allocated three prisoners from quite disparate political systems. Mainly through their continued letter campaigns, these groups manage to gain many releases. In 1979 1573 new cases were taken up and 1449 adoptees released.

An ex-adoptee, Julio de Pena Valdez, described the effect of the thousands of letters written on his behalf:

I was being kept naked in an underground cell. When the first two hundred letters came the guards gave me back my clothes. Then the next two hundred letters came and the prison director came to see me. When the next pile of letters arrived, the director got in touch with his superior. The letters kept coming and coming: three thousand of them. The President was informed. The letters still kept arriving and the President called the prison and told them to let me go.

After I was released the President called me to his office for a man to man talk. He said: "How is it that a trade union leader like you has so many friends all over the world?" He showed me an enormous box full of all the letters he had received and when we parted, he gave them to me. I still have them.

The Amnesty group seeks to shine the rays of the AI candle into the prison cell, to give sustaining hope to its adoptee—by sending parcels and letters to him and his family, by becoming the friends who will not forget. A priest in the Philippines wrote:

This is the sixteenth month of my prolonged Holy Week and Easter Sunday seems to be still very far away ... I'm sharing with you all these thoughts because I feel like talking to friends. It is my way of telling you how I appreciate your sympathy.

It is a long letter because it is expressing the panic of a man who has been badly hurt—the burning pains of living life in the depths. I can now understand how St. Paul composed all those beautiful epistles while confined in some murky dungeon in Rome. He could not help but be lengthy and forceful. There are more than 60 of us in this compound. One lady is a nursing mother ... like myself, most of them do not yet have formal charges ..."

For some, the link with Amnesty has not only brought comfort in jail, but saved them from suicide. Groups also share in the joys of releases. A Zimbabwe prisoner of conscience wrote about the news of his release: "If only I could make you feel how I feel deep inside me. I read and hear of people who shed tears of joy. Yesterday, I did not shed tears, but *burst out* in tears of joy."

Amnesty's role in the world is a vital one. In its London research centre it prepares not only material on individual cases but information on human rights situations around the world. In 1979 alone it published reports on 96 countries. Its action is not only on behalf of the individual, but international campaigns are mounted which are directed towards an area of violations in a country, such as escalating torture in Uruguay and the thousands held without trial in Laos.

TORTURE

As the research centre has developed, Amnesty investigators have become appalled at the extent of the growing disease of the 20th century—torture—particularly in the interrogation of political detainees. In 1972 AI launched a world-wide campaign for the abolition of torture, and in 1973 published a report detailing incidents of torture occurring in more than 60 countries.

In some countries it has been possible for Amnesty to halt torture through public outcry; but in others it continues today, ranging from incidents of beatings of detainees of South Africa, electric shock and other gross mal-treatment in Chile and many other South American countries, and legal amputations in Pakistan, to sophisticated misuse of drugs in the USSR. To meet this apparently escalating problem, Amnesty has developed new methods.

It set up, for example, a world-wide Urgent Action network, whereby telex or airmail information about impending or occurring torture are sent to all Amnesty sections which immediately act by cabling or phoning a protest to the recalcitrant authorities. Teams of letter-writers follow up these initial telegrams with expressions of concern. Often this sudden, broadly-based protest is successful; unfortunately it can also fail.

But the volunteers who reach across the world to save their fellow human beings know they must try. The victim has no other hope. Most offending governments have vanquished effective opposition and imposed controls on the press and the judiciary.

Torture for these governments is as much a means of repression as it is a means of eliciting information. The candle in the barbed wire, Amnesty's symbol, is for many the only light in a dark future.

MASSACRE

Amnesty must also seek to evolve techniques to combat other frightening trends in the world today. In Uganda, Kampuchea and Ethiopia wholesale massacres have been carried out, and the usual AI techniques are ineffective or even counter-productive. The movement is experimenting with the use of "country dossiers" whereby groups adopt not only individuals but an entire region, aiming to increase the worldwide awareness of the crisis situations.

Amnesty's publication of information on the massacre of children in the Central African Republic, for example, led to the toppling of the Bokassa regime; sadly, in some other countries, it seems that the international community has turned a blind eye to atrocities and Amnesty's pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

ABUSE OF MEDICINE

The growing abuse of medicine for political purposes is another area of great concern. In psychiatric institutions in the USSR and Romania, many sane human rights workers, Christian believers and other dissenters are being held in prison and mistreated with large doses of neuroleptic and other drugs, in a form of pressure to have them renounce their disapproval of beliefs and behaviour.

Arvidas Chekhanavichius, for example, is a 31-year-old Lithuanian human rights campaigner declared “socially dangerous” and now confined to Chernyakhovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital and “treated” in the severest type of psychiatric confinement in the USSR. He had already been arrested and confined from 1973 to 1979 after being charged with “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda” after poems and tape-recordings of foreign broadcasts were found in his flat.

But there have been successes even in the USSR—Victor Fainberg, for example, confined for five years in a psychiatric prison for taking part in a five-minute peaceful demonstration in Red Square, was released, without recanting, due to world-wide pressure.

EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS

Another frightening trend is the increase in extra-judicial killings. In some countries, either governments or non-government organizations, instead of detaining opponents, are eliminating them. Death squads are rife in places such as Guatemala and Argentina. But other countries are guilty also. In Turkey, nearly 3000 people have been murdered for political reasons over the past two years—the political assassination rate now averages 10 a day.

Thousands of people just “disappear”, and it is often not known whether they have died or are imprisoned. “A single death by firing squad can provoke a world-wide scandal: with the thousands of disappeared people there is always the convenience of uncertainty ... there are no crimes to report or explanations to be given” (Eduardo Galeano *Index*, March/April 1978). Often whole families “disappear” and Amnesty has documented lists of young children in Argentina who have become such political victims.

Amnesty wants the death toll to stop, not only extra-judicial killings, disappearances, massacres, but legal executions also, and in 1979 carried out a world-wide campaign to draw attention to the extent of both criminal and political executions, often carried out after speedy secret trials, without the right of defence and without any appeal. The Urgent Action network of Amnesty has been extended to help not only the torture victims, but those under threat of death. Relatives, lawyers and ex-prisoners have expressed their belief that such international appeals have helped protect individuals from torture and death.

Amnesty has grown enormously in numbers and prestige as a human rights organization in recent years, but it is still dependent on the ordinary person for its effectiveness. As Suriya Wickremasinghe said in receiving the UN Human Rights Peace Prize on Amnesty’s behalf:

Let there be no mistake about who is being honoured here today. It is everyone Who has ever put their name on the bottom of an AI appeal. It is everyone who has ever written a letter asking for the release of a prisoner of conscience. It is everyone who has ever stood in a vigil mourning the death of a political prisoner.

It is everyone who has ever handed out leaflets, stuffed envelopes, licked stamps, kept membership lists, done the accounts and helped out behind the scenes ...

Human rights cannot be left to governments, legislators and jurists. They are the concern and responsibility of the man and woman in the street, of the labourer, the farmer, the office clerk, the student. Every name on every petition counts.”

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Steak, Potato, Peas and Chopsuey Linear and Non-linear Thinking in Theological Education

Peter Chang

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Is straight line thinking the only way to do theology or does this linear approach sometimes lead to a truncated form of biblical understanding? How important is the story, the parable, the mystical experience or the emotional response in understanding a truth of the Bible? Professor Peter Chang challenges our western epistemology. We hope that he will develop his chopsuey approach to theological understanding.

(Editor)

Why do Chinese restaurants seem to be ubiquitous in the West? It is because an occasional chopsuey is a welcome change from steak, potato and peas or chicken and French fries. This may well have a lesson for theological educators.

The cry for alternatives in theological education is heard not only in many Third World countries, which are growing more and more uneasy about the imported Western system of seminary training. Western theological educators are also searching for new ways. Various proposals have been made and numerous innovative ideas are in the experimental stage. This essay is to share some “chopsuey” insight, which may contribute to the “Steak, Potato and Peas” dominated theological cookery.

Theological education evolves in the larger context of culture and is closely related to people’s thinking style. In the Western academic scene, linear thinking has been the dominant mode. It is largely analytical, objective, logical and systematic. In the following, we will see how such a thinking style is manifested in inductive Bible study, theology, homiletics and theological education. To see its pervasiveness and to understand its weaknesses will help us to reform and to innovate.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

In the West, the inductive method is perhaps one of the most prevalent ways for serious Bible study. Basically it consists of three steps: Observation, Interpretation and Application. It embodies the spirit of scientific inquiry as exemplified by the famous story of Louis