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## Evangelical Review of Theology

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According to Packer the work of sanctification is predicated upon [p. 332](#) justification and adoption which unlike sanctification do not involve a process. He argues:

Justified and adopted into God's family through faith in Christ, Christians are immediately and eternally secure, nothing can sever them from the love of the Father and the Son ([Romans 8:32–39](#)). But the work of re-creating us as psycho-physical beings on whom Christ's image is to be stamped, the work of sanctification as older evangelical theology called it, is not the work of a moment.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV CONCLUSIONS

First, Suenens, Harper and Packer see renewal (or revival) as a work of God's Spirit. However, of the three it is Packer who understands the phenomenon in the most explicitly Trinitarian way.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, all accent the corporate nature of renewal (or revival). It is God at work amongst His people. However, Suenens of the three is the most committed to the institutional form of his church which he sees as Christ's own historic body.

Thirdly, each appeals to the Bible in stating his position. In Suenens case the doctrinal stance of his church clearly directs his Bible reading. With Harper, he allows the Spirit to provide a revelation of God's will for today's generation apart from the pages of the Bible. Whilst for Packer, the Bible alone is to determine the models and categories by which renewal is to be understood and assessed.

Fourthly, of great interest is the apparent convergence in views between Cardinal Suenens and Michael Harper. That convergence lies not only in sharing a charismatic experience but also in the theological understanding of that experience. Moreover, both see the charismatic experience as a means the Spirit is using to draw Christians of differing traditions together.

Fifthly, Suenens and Harper make little reference to grace in discussing renewal. Whilst for Packer, renewal (or revival) needs to be [p. 333](#) considered in the context of sin and grace with the focus on Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour and Lord. In his view, the Spirit's ministry is not self-promoting but Christ-promoting. Word and Spirit must not be divorced from each other nor from the Christ to whom both bear witness.

Lastly, with regard to the doctrine of justification by faith alone—the doctrine that Luther described as the article of a standing or falling church—Packer alone quite explicitly relates the Spirit's work of sanctification to the foundation of justification.

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The Rev. G. A. Cole lectures at Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia. [p. 334](#)

## The Fall Is A Human Reality

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>38</sup> Rev. Cole prepared this article before the release of Dr. Packer's book, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*. See a review of the book elsewhere in this issue of ERT. (Ed.)

# Gerald Bray

*Reprinted from Evangel, Spring 1985, with permission*

The biblical doctrine of the Fall of man, like that of creation, is universal in its scope and fundamental in its importance, but like its companion it has been just as thoroughly derided and discounted as mythological. To some extent the accusers are a different breed, however. Creation has come under attack from biologists, chemists and geologists—experts in the natural sciences. The Fall has been discredited more by psychologists, sociologists and philosophers—students of the human sciences. This is not surprising, because although creation is certainly concerned with the origin of man, this is only one aspect of the doctrine. The Fall, however, is a human matter above all, with only somewhat debatable consequences for the rest of the created order.

## THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD

It is therefore a matter of primary importance to consider what the Scriptures tell us about man as a creature, if we are to understand what is meant by the Fall in Christian teaching. We are told in [Genesis 2:7](#) that man was formed from the dust of the ground, a fact which secures his link with the material world. But at the same time we are also told that God breathed into him the breath of life, a feature which immediately distinguishes him from his fellow animals. We are also told ([1:26–27](#)) that man was created in the *image and likeness* of God, a vitally important concept which sets him apart from every other created being.

What is meant by this expression? For many centuries it was believed that the image and the likeness were distinct things, corresponding to the soul and spirit according to the classical tripartite division of man. Today we no longer accept that division, at least not in its traditional form, and our better knowledge of Hebrew tells us that *image* and *likeness* are two words for the same thing. As a result it is no longer possible for us to believe that at the Fall man lost the likeness but kept the image, so that Christian conversion is a restoration of the likeness of God in man. In some ways this is a pity, since the doctrine of the restoration of the likeness relied heavily on the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer—sanctifying his spirit—and thus touched on a fundamental Christian concern. In some branches of the [p. 335](#) Church this has been felt so strongly that the old idea has been artificially maintained, in spite of evidence to the contrary!

Conservatism of this kind is always a temptation, but it plays straight into the hands of those who brand the whole idea as an outworn myth. The abandonment of the soul-spirit analogy and the recognition that the image/likeness is a single reality must be accepted, but of course there are still problems, inherited from the older scheme of ideas, which need to be faced. The first of these is that the entire image/ likeness was lost at the Fall or if not completely lost, then so seriously defaced that it is no longer recognisable. This view has often been associated, one way or another with Protestants, and it has been severely criticised. The Bible nowhere says that the image/likeness was lost at the Fall; indeed, it appears as a functioning reality well after that event (eg. [Genesis 9:6](#)). It is true that the idea does not reappear in the Old Testament, and that in the New it is strictly linked to Christ, the new Adam in whose image we are re-created, but that does not take away the basic point at issue. We are not entitled, on the basis of Scripture, to say that man lost the image of God at the Fall, nor ought we to say that it has been “defaced”, since the evidence for that too is lacking.

## AN ACT OF DISOBEDIENCE

But if we reject traditional teaching about the image/likeness of God in man, are we not rejecting the notion of the Fall? Here the answer must be an unqualified no. The Fall, in Scripture, is not linked to the image/ likeness of God but to the divine dispensation in the Garden of Eden. In [Genesis 2:17](#) we are told that man was allowed complete freedom in the Garden, as long as he made no attempt to acquire moral awareness. This awareness was present in the Garden as a living reality, but it belonged to God, and not to man.

It may be that the tree is meant to be understood symbolically, but we should be very careful about this. It is one of the tricks of the Devil to make us think that sin must be some great crime, which the average person is most unlikely to commit. We are less inclined to believe that a small thing might be equally sinful and have consequences which are no less serious. Eating fruit from a tree may not seem like very much, but if it is an act of disobedience, it is sin every bit as much as the biggest crime. Our human minds need adjustment just at this point, since we are disinclined to accept the principle that divine authority is the source of Christian morality, rather than abstract principle. It is wrong for us to kill because God has said so—not [p. 336](#) because there is some ethical standard which makes killing inappropriate.

The key to understanding the Fall is accepting that it was an act of disobedience above all else. As such, it did not affect man in his ontological state, but it *did* touch something more important—his relationship with God. Because of his disobedience, man was cut off from God, and no longer able to live in the way in which God had intended. The fact that his physical being was not altered as a result of this is extremely important for two reasons. First, it takes away any need to regard sin as a *stain* on the soul which must be cleaned (e.g. by baptism). We are not talking about an inherited defect but about a broken relationship which must be put right. Secondly, it makes it possible to understand how Christ could have been a man yet not have been sinful. If we picture sin as part of human nature, then either Christ sinned or he did not have a human nature—an impossible dilemma! But if sin is disobedience, leading to a broken relationship with God, then clearly Christ did not sin, even though he was a human being just like Adam!

It might be added in this connection that sin as disobedience also destroys the common equation which is made between sin and suffering. Today we hear talk of healing as if it were the automatic birthright of every Christian. The belief that pain and illness are due to unconfessed sin has returned in a slightly modified guise, since now they are likely to be seen as the work of hostile evil powers! Scripture gives no comfort to supporters of such views, who have simply misunderstood what happened—or rather what did *not* happen—at the Fall. Man in the Garden of Eden was mortal, but preserved from death. When he fell, that protection was removed, but his actual physical being did not change.

## TEMPTED TO BE LIKE GOD

The Bible tells us that the Fall of Man came about through a disobedience which sprang from *temptation*. Man did not simply decide to disobey God; he was lured away by the promise that disobedience would make him more like God himself. And surprisingly, that promise was correct! When he ate the fruit, he *did* become like God as we see in [Genesis 3:22](#). The moral awareness which had been God's preserve now became man's privilege as well. What is more, God nowhere takes it away, either in punishment for the act of disobedience or as part of the restoration of man in Christ. The second [P. 337](#) Adam is in this respect greater than the first, a fact which is never denied or compromised in any way.

What are we to make of this extraordinary fact? We are told by the Apostle Paul that no man can thwart the plan of God, and here we see that even in sin his purpose for us is being worked out. At the same time, we cannot forget that it is being worked out in a way which is radically twisted as far as fallen man is concerned. His moral awareness increases his likeness to God, but on a basis of sinfulness which only serves to condemn him all the more. The message of Scripture, as we see from [Romans 1](#), is that the more the unregenerate man knows of God, the greater is his condemnation. There is no scope here for any kind of natural theology which might be linked in with a concept of salvation by moral principle and good works!

Another important aspect of this is that man is engaged in a web of evil which goes far beyond himself. In recent years we have seen a renewed interest in types of sin which go beyond the conscious disobedience of the individual, though in the secular society in which we live this interest has focused on the structures of society. We are now being told that man is a prisoner of his heredity and his environment—factors which alleviate and may even remove any responsibility on his part. The Bible certainly does not reject the idea of superhuman sin, but neither does it explain it in this way. As far as the Scriptures are concerned, man has passed from being the Son of God to being the Son of Beelzebub—the slave of Satan, who has entangled him in his rebellion against the Creator. Far from taking away his responsibility, it places him squarely in the camp of the rebellious angels, to whom the human race is in thrall. Cosmic evil is personal, just as man is personal, and where there are persons there is responsibility as well.

## **VULNERABILITY OF MALE AND FEMALE**

A further point about the Fall, which is so obvious as to be easily overlooked, or else so potentially controversial that it is simpler to ignore, is the role assigned to the female sex. We are told that it was Eve who sinned first, not only in Genesis but in [1 Timothy 2:14](#) where Paul uses this fact as justification for giving women a subordinate role in the public worship of the Church. How can we accept this in a day of sexual equality? The answer would appear to lie once more in the close connection between the Fall and the origin of man, male and female. The female came out of the male, and thus in some sense her being depended on his. Had he been the one to sin first, she might **P. 338** have escaped, or else been included in the sin without her consent. But by attacking the woman first Satan was able to touch the man at his weakest spot, and thereby seize them both. It is not because Eve had a greater guilt than Adam that women were subjected to men in the way outlined by Paul, but rather because *both* male and female were more vulnerable when the female was allowed to take the lead. It is for the protection of both, and not for the glory of one over the other, that Paul's commands are given in the way they are.

We must conclude our examination of the Fall with one final point. This is the question of *total depravity*, so familiar to students of the Synod of Dort and so resented by those who believe that it is a miserable rejection of any form of human goodness or achievement. Total depravity, like everything else connected with the Fall, must be seen primarily as a spiritual consequence of disobedience. It is not that every human being is so thoroughly corrupt that he cannot rise to any good whatever. Unregenerate men and women are full of good works and great achievements, not infrequently surpassing those of Christians. Nobody is denying that! What we are talking about here is salvation, which comes by grace through faith, and not by works! The doctrine of total depravity says that fallen man is encased in a framework of sinfulness from which he cannot escape. He has a conscience, but uses it on the wrong foundation, for wrong ends. He does good, but in a

manner which is ultimately futile and self-defeating. None of his gifts is denied; it is the context which is wrong, and which only God can put right.

When all is said and done, the Fall is a reality which has introduced into human experience the spiritual rebellion of the fallen angels. We did not start this rebellion; we have been tempted into sharing it. But once caught in the net there is no escape, unless God himself provides a way. This he did in Christ, when he defeated the power of Satan, destroyed the gates of hell and paid the penalty for sin which made it possible for God to receive us back as his children and open up to us the tree of life from which the disobedience of our first ancestor had so tragically barred us.

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**p. 339**

# **The Work of the Holy Spirit and Evangelization Reflections on Oslo '85**

**Bruce J. Nicholls**

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I wish to summarise my reflections on this important consultation in 10 points.

## **I**

### **The Holy Spirit empowers God's people for world evangelization.**

World evangelization is the central task of the church. It is set within Christ's kingly reign in creation and redemption. While social responsibility and justice are also part of Christ's purpose for his church, reconciliation with God is central to reconciliation with one's neighbour. The Father sent the Spirit to bear witness to the Son and without his witness ours is futile. He is the agent of salvation or as the Nicene creed confesses "the giver of life".

World evangelization is an unfinished task. If it is true that half of the people who ever lived are alive today and that statistically the number of Christians remains static at less than one-third of the world's population, then the extent of spiritual lostness is unprecedented. Manifestations of demonic power, whether overt or masked, are as great as in the apostolic age. Human suffering in all its forms continues to escalate.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the only hope now and for the age to come. We await his return in power. He gave to his disciples and to every succeeding generation the promise of the paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to empower them for this global task. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost to equip God's people to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. Today the same spirit renews and empowers his people and thrusts them into mission. In obedience to the inspired Word of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are called into costly discipleship as individuals, families and **p. 340**