

The Enlightenment Context of the Current Ecological Crisis

*Your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste (Lev. 26:33).*⁶

Before coming to the main part of this essay—considerations regarding a biblical ecology—I want to highlight some important features of modernity and late or post modernity. I believe these features will prove to be a very significant aid in helping to clear away some of the misconceptions regarding the origins of the ecological crisis and the way toward its resolution.

Enlightenment

Immanuel Kant, in his prize-winning essay, "What is Enlightenment?" provides a banner version of the core idea of the Enlightenment: "*Sapere aude!*" (Dare to know!).⁷ Enlightenment can be understood as self-assertion against the heteronomous traditions that kept people in subservience and ignorance.⁸ Enlightenment lifts up reason as both opportunity and necessity. Reason is both the opportunity given humanity by its nature to determine the telos of history and the means to achieve that transcendent end. Tradition and every heteronomous power are styled by the Enlightenment as that which potentially stifles reason. It is necessary that people think for themselves, rather than that they continue to subject themselves in tutelage to these authorities. At the heart of the modern, enlightened age is confidence in the faculty of reason. If humans will only think for themselves they will become free moral and intellectual agents. And if humans become enlightened in this way, then many of the social and material ills that plague humanity will be resolved.

A core goal of the Enlightenment was to apply socially, culturally and politically what had been achieved in the natural sciences. The methodical application of the principles of scientific rationality to every realm of human existence, it was believed, would provide the way forward from the perpetual strife and war which characterized the human condition to a realm of peace and prosperity.⁹ It is important to understand that the intolerance and brutality of Christian versus Christian during and in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation provided in significant measure the motivation for these developments.¹⁰ In the context of the wars of religion it became imperative to find a secular and rational as opposed to a religious and creedal approach to the organization and governance of nations and states. Furthermore, the successes of scientific methods in describ-

ing and manipulating the natural world became a metaphor for the imagination of what might be achieved politically and socially. Thus scientific rationality became the determinative force that would shape the modern western world.

The Opposition of Nature and History

In describing the development of the scientific approach to nature, Ernst Troeltsch points out that over time a mathematical–mechanical view of reality was developed.¹¹ This was the outcome of a secularized view of nature. The scientific perspective of nature was atheistic; that is, it sought to understand the natural (non–human) world without referring to God in any way. Franz Baader warned, “the non–spiritual view of nature which Descartes especially brought into vogue was bound to result in the non–natural view of the mind and spirit, and the godless view of both.”¹² This statement captures the problem that western culture has yet to solve with any satisfaction. The statement reveals the opposition of the human and non–human worlds, which can be designated as the dualism of history and nature. History represents the creative world of humanity and nature represents the environment or stage for this human activity.¹³

It is in this context that Francis Bacon’s words illuminate the fundamentals of modernity’s relationship to nature: “We will press nature to the rack until she divulges her secrets.”¹⁴ Bacon’s words and the character of modern science suggest that nature is rightly regarded as a type of slave to men: “Not man, she is available to serve the curiosity and desires of men, but especially the desires. And when nature submits reluctantly she may and shall be tormented until she obliges the commands of men.”

For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique; and both, in the practice of this technique, are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious—such as digging up and mutilating the dead.

If we compare the chief trumpeter of the new era (Bacon) with Marlowe’s Faustus, the similarity is striking ... It is not truth he wants from the devils, but gold and guns and girls ... In the same spirit Bacon condemns those who value knowledge as an end in itself: this, for him, is to use a mistress for pleasure what ought to be a spouse for fruit. The true object is to extend Man’s power to the performance of all things possible.¹⁵

If God is completely other and beyond the world, and if of the creatures only humans have minds and spirits and these are regarded as fundamentally other than the rest of the world, then anything goes in human use and modification or destruction of the non-human. It is important to keep in mind that the context of these developments is the early modern period—the Enlightenment. These developments are a reflection of reason's self-assertion against tradition, as well as of the dualism of human versus non-human that developed in concert with reason's self-assertion. Others have pointed out that many Christians responded to these developments by adapting both faith and practice to the new scientific and technological paradigm for understanding the earth. In an attempt to be relevant Christians found theological and biblical reasons for validating this instrumentalizing dualism.¹⁶

Rethinking Nature and History in Their Unity

The Bible has been interpreted and presented as the source and foundation of an anthropology that regards humans as spiritual beings, fundamentally different from all other physical reality. And humans, therefore, have the right to exercise a violent and despotic lordship over the material world. This dualistic conception of creation results, it is argued, in the destruction of the world by humans and their technological and industrial mastery of non-human reality.¹⁷ Furthermore, eschatological hopes that look to an eternal spiritual future in heaven, while hating this life and this world, are connected with such dualism.¹⁸ In contrast, it is especially some of the radical environmentalists that have taken the lead in arguing for a new, or in some cases renewed, monistic ontology of being. The Gaia hypothesis is a well-known example of such an ontology.¹⁹ In response, some Christians have attempted to defend a dualistic conception of creation, while arguing that the dualism of spirit and matter (also expressed in the dualisms of mind and body, human and non-human, and God and creation) does not necessarily lead to the destruction of the environment.²⁰

The approach that I follow in this paper may be thought of as fitting somewhere between a dualistic and a monistic approach. It is a biblically based approach that starts with a view that all reality, including both human history and non-human nature, are the creation of God. And since both history and nature are God's, then they are, when seen in their relationship to him, one reality. This is

not merely a theological claim. As Wolfhart Pannenberg, among others, has argued, nature has a history and humans are part of the natural rhythm of life and death.²¹ What I propose to do is to begin to explore a biblical perspective and ethic of the relationship of humans to the rest of creation—in light of the unity of both in God.

One of the key elements in a biblical approach to these problems involves recognition of a fundamental problem with the dualism that arose in the modern period. Modernity's atheistic approach to nature involves a refusal to acknowledge God as the creator. This modern perspective fails to take account of humanity's relationship with God or of the responsibilities for all creatures that come from that prior relationship. Having cut the world off from God, modernity no longer had any moorings for morality.²² Bacon's lust for power is the guiding drive of the sciences in modernity's torturous questioning and manipulation of nature.²³ The problem is more than merely a problem; it is a sin. And this sin has had many consequences, one of which is the degradation of the earth. Sin, as revealed in the Old Testament, results in pollution and ritual uncleanness, but it also results in the degradation of the land. The path to healing the land passes through repentance: "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and *heal their land*" (2 Chron. 7:14).

Biblical Ecology

My intention in this section of the paper is to develop briefly five suggestions toward a biblically shaped theology of humans in relationship to God and to the non-human world. I will start with the biblical meaning of human dominion and subjugation. Second, I will offer some thoughts on the relationship of sin, ritual purity and curse to the health of the earth. Third, I want to point out a connection between pollution of the environment and oppression of humans by humans. Fourth, I will discuss repentance. Finally, I will look at the development of redemption and eschatological hopes in their relationship to the land.

Dominion

The offending passage for the critics of Judaism and Christianity is Genesis 1:26–31, which states the following (I have italicized the offending portions):

Then God said, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.*" So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.*" And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

It is not hard to see how this passage might be used to justify many types of tyrannical dominion of humans over the non-human world in the context of a dualistic ontology, as I have described it above. However, such interpretations and applications of this text in and to modern contexts are unjustifiably shallow or self-serving readings of Genesis.

In their Old Testament context, dominion and subjugation do not legitimate anything like the modern limitless exploitation of the earth by industry and technology for the primary purpose of feeding the tenaciously nurtured lust and greed of western investors and consumers. Rather, the ideas of dominion and subjugation must be understood in the context of the image of God. It is the immediate consequence of having been created in the image of God that humans are given the mandate to rule in the earth (Gen. 1:26ff.). "As the image of God, we are God's vicars preparing the way for his own dominion in the world."²⁴ Dominion over creation is to be exercised in a manner that represents the dominion of the Creator. The immediate context is the creation of all reality. In other words, it is the context of giving life and abundance in which creatures flourish in harmonious acknowledgement of the Creator as God. Human dominion, if it is guided by the context of the passage itself, must express these same virtues. Furthermore, the aim of all creation is one of relationship with God and in the context of this prior relationship, it is also harmonious relationship of creatures with each other.²⁵ This originating relationship of all creation—in the context of God's declaration made even before humans were created, "it is good"—provides the context, character, direction, and limits of human dominion.²⁶

Pollution

However, as the book of Genesis makes clear in the immediately following verses (3:14–19), all of creation falls under a curse together with humanity. That all creation is included in the curse reflects the above point that all creation is united in the call to be in relationship with the creator. The aim of the entire creation is frustrated by the sin of humanity. The character of the relationship of humans to the rest of creation is also compromised: “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life ...” (3:17). It is possible to see in these verses that the dominion that humans will exercise henceforward will not be a clear expression of the image and rule of God. In fact, the relationship is compromised in both directions. The earth bears a curse because of human sin and humans will suffer the consequences through the difficulty of subduing the earth in order to survive. There is a unity in the curse that corresponds to the unity in creation.²⁷

Saving all creation from destruction is a, if not the, primary theme of the Bible. Exodus 24 has strong elements that hearken back to creation, but looks to a new or re-creation that takes human sin into account. When Moses is called onto the mountain to meet with God and to receive the “tables of stone, with the law and the commandment” (v. 12), Moses must wait for six days. And it is on the seventh day that the Lord “called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud” (v. 16). This week hearkens back to the week of creation. These latter six days are days of the renewal of the world through the establishing of the law and of the tabernacle. When this is complete, Moses is invited into the presence of God and God comes to walk with his creatures as he did with Adam and Eve in the Garden. However, now the law and the tabernacle mediate the intimacy of the Creator-creature relationship. According to Jewish tradition, during the six days God prepared a model of the heavenly tabernacle for Moses to come to and in which to meet with YHWH on the seventh day. Creation and the new creation are not complete until the Sabbath. It is the resting in God’s presence, entering into His rest as Moses entered into the presence of God, that brings creation to its fulfillment.²⁸

The intention of the law is to renew humans in their relationship to God and in their role of representing the rule of God over the earth. “Creation is the real-

ity that, on the basis of continually new communication of human beings with God, is ordained to be perceived by human beings and that human beings are ordained to have a role in shaping. In cultic life—that is, in communication with God—this knowledge of creation is to be acquired, developed, renewed, and verified in diverse forms.”²⁹ It is in the context of the law, henceforward, that the renewal of creaturely relationships with God and of creation is achieved. The law provides a means of understanding what it is precisely that results in the degradation or pollution of the land. And it provides the depth of understanding that leads to a recognition that is not simply that the land is polluted, but that the relationships of all creatures with God are compromised. And it is in that brokenness that the land suffers physical degradation under the distorted exercise of human authority.

The relationship of sin to curse is explicit in various ways throughout the ensuing history of the people of Israel. The blessings and curses of the holiness code for example make this point. Chapter 18 of Leviticus is a primary source for this insight.

Do not defile yourselves by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am casting out before you defiled themselves; and the land became defiled, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for all of these abominations the men of the land did, who were before you, so that the land became defiled); lest the land vomit you out, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you (18:24–28).³⁰

In the broader context of the holiness code (Leviticus) loyalty to Yahweh and Sabbath keeping are the two primary conditions that must be kept if Israel is not to suffer the desolation of its land and, ultimately, rejection from the land.

The prophets also express this participation of the land in God’s judgments against peoples that have become evil.

Behold, the LORD will lay waste the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants ... The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled; for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants;

for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left. (Isa. 24:1–6).³¹

In the holiness code of Leviticus, as well as in this passage from Isaiah, it is the land of Israel that is degraded as a result of the sins of Israel.

In Isaiah, the curse is also expressed universally and hearkens back to the days of Noah when all creation was threatened with destruction. The earth reels and staggers under the oppressive weight of human sinfulness (Isa. 24:20).³² It is simultaneously the land of Israel and all the earth that fall under the curse. This correlates negatively with the simultaneous blessing of “Abraham and Jacob and the blessing of all humanity.”³³ The blessing has turned to a curse for all the people (the earth has been filled and subdued) and the entire earth (which participates in the curse of sin that comes upon the people). It is God, as we see in Isaiah, who subjects the earth to endure the curse of sin together with humans. This parallels the curse of both humans and the land that expressed in Genesis 3.

It is important to note, albeit in passing, that curses in the Old Testament function both as judgment and as call to repentance. A curse is an opportunity for repentance and healing on the condition that people take to heart that the curse rightly falls on them for their evil actions and respond in accord with that realization by repenting. Repentance includes confession and ritual cleansing of sin, as well as a change in behavior. Seen in this context the ecological crisis could be seen as “a summons from nature to humans to again acknowledge God as Creator and as Lord of creation and to leave off the tyrannical usurpation of this kingship. Positively, it is a call to take up our destined regency and to determine our actions by the creative love of God.”³⁴

Injustice and Pollution

Pollution of the land and of the people is also connected with injustice between people. When Cain slays Abel, the blood of Abel is said to cry out from the ground and Cain is thus “cursed from the ground” (Gen. 4:10–12). The violence and corruption of the people of the earth led God to the judgment that “the earth was corrupt ... and ... filled with violence” (Gen. 6:11). The condemnations that the Bible expresses against the nations and against Israel also draw the

land into connection with injustice that is practiced by the powerful against the weak. Leviticus 18, for example, speaks of the land becoming defiled by the sexual exploitation of women by men (daughters, granddaughters, sisters and mothers by their fathers, grandfathers, brothers and sons—in every case the weaker is exploited by the more powerful). Oppression and undue violence are listed as reasons for the desolation of the land by the Lord (e.g., Jer. 6:6–8; Joel 3:19–21).

It is important to note the connection of unjust relationships in the current move toward ever-greater globalization. The land and people of poorer and weaker nations are drawn and forced into economic, political and military relationships with more powerful nations and with multi-national corporations. The corporations and industrialized nations are not purely interested in fostering development in these countries, but are concerned to further their own markets and profits. Those who hold power are not as immediately concerned about the damage done to the earth and the injustice done to people in remote lands as they are about what is done and believed in the regions of largest consumption of their products and services.³⁵

Repentance

The book of Leviticus, in the midst of an extended description of the curses that will fall on the people and the land—should they disobey the law—also provides for a way of redemption. It is repentance: “But if they confess their iniquity ... if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity; then I will remember my covenant with Jacob ... Isaac and ... Abraham, and I will remember the land” (26:40–42). This promise is repeated several times and is a significant theme of hope that accompanies texts of cursing and judgment.³⁶

There is also a tradition that blood will atone for sin and will cleanse the land. According to the book of Exodus the people are protected by blood from the curse by which God devastates the land of Egypt (referring to the death of the first born in every family and also of the cattle, Exod. 12:13). In cultic worship it is the sacrifice of animals that atones for the sins of the people. However, in the case of murder, by which the land is said to be polluted, it is only the blood of the murderer that can make “expiation ... for the land” (Num. 35:33; Deut. 32:42). In both types of violations of the law, there is a turning from patterns of

lawlessness to submission to the law and to the rectification that the law requires. Turning and submission are accomplished in the context of seeking both forgiveness from God and renewed relationship with Him.

There is a significant development of the theme of expiation by blood in post-exilic Judaism. One of the recurring patterns in some of the literature includes the following elements: the broad setting of covenant and blessing, the sin of the people, the punishment, a turning point and salvation.³⁷ In the Maccabean literature, 2 Maccabees follows this structure and in the text the shedding of innocent blood functions as the turning point for the people of Israel. Eleazar the scribe and a mother and her seven sons choose to be loyal to the Torah by refusing to eat the meat of pigs. They are each tormented and die at the hands of Antiochus IV. Immediately after their deaths the author introduces Judas Maccabeus and narrates the successful struggle for freedom from pagan overlordship. The guilt of the land and of the people has been atoned for by the deaths of these willing and faithful sufferers.³⁸ The retelling of these martyrdoms in 4 Maccabees makes explicit their atoning character: "thus their native land was purified through them" (4 Macc. 1:11).

Promise, Hope, and Redemption

The promise of renewed blessing following on repentance and purification did not find its fulfillment in Israel's history. It is clear from various texts that the post-exilic community as well as the community that was ruled by the Hasmoneans did not regard its achievements and blessings as an adequate fulfillment of the blessings that God had promised to Abraham, David and others. Texts such as Isaiah 65:17 point to something far greater than experience testified to: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind." These verses hearken back to the days of Noah—to both the curse and the new creation. The covenant that God makes with Noah is a covenant not only with Noah but also with all creation. However, before the covenant is made, creation is all but utterly destroyed. The creation of a new heaven and a new earth presupposes the final and complete destruction of the old—although not so as to eliminate a continuity of the creation and of God's love for creation.³⁹

Both of these themes are taken up in the New Testament. For example, 2 Peter

3 contains both the warning of divine judgment and destruction that are coming as well as the hope that goes beyond death to eternal life in the presence of God. The image of new heavens and a new earth "in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13) holds the promise that evil will despoil neither its blessed inhabitants nor the new earth. The first four verses of Revelation 21 make the same point.⁴⁰ In these hopes and promises the fate of humanity and the fate of the earth are bound together. Both flourish in the context of righteousness and both are degraded and ultimately destroyed in the context of evil. The notion of the eternal punishment of the wicked is part of the finality that is described by the destruction of this earth. The passages that state the promises also warn of the destruction of the wicked. The logic of this is straightforward. If the new earth is to go on in blessing forever, there is no place for evil. Thus those who are not faithful worshippers of God will be excluded from the salvation of creation from its threatened despoiling by evil, for in not being faithful to God they participate in the despoiling of creation.

The New Testament idea that all creation is being redeemed should be understood in the context of these developments, promises and expectations. It is in the atoning suffering and death (once for all) and resurrection (first-born of many) of Jesus the Messiah that all of these elements come together. "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation ... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:15-20). The passage continues with these themes and speaks of preaching the gospel to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:23). It may be tempting to interpret "all creation" and "every creature" in a narrowly anthropocentric manner. However, there are other texts in the New Testament that lend force to seeing this passage in the broadest scope. The version of the Great Commission that appears in Mark 16:15 states, for example, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to *the whole creation.*"

Paul, in Romans 8, draws together the longing for redemption of the Spirit of God, humans and the whole of creation. The poignant images of groaning in labor together and in sighs that express longings and imaginings that penetrate more deeply than a merely human vocabulary, express an eager confidence in

and difficult striving for the goal that has been promised. It is a goal that brings to mind and overcomes the curse of Genesis 3:17–19. This text states most explicitly that all creation—human and non-human alike—share in the futility and decay of evil and the curse of God as well as in the hope and expectation of the redemption from evil that has been, is being and will be accomplished by God in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, as he is entering Jerusalem to the enthusiastic praises of the people, responds to the criticism of the Pharisees—“rebuke your disciples”—with these stunning words: “if these were silent, the very stones would cry out” (Luke 19:40). The merciful and gracious presence of the King of creation is not restricted to human need and redemption. It addresses the longing and aim of the entire creation. At that prophetic moment when the creator in the person of Jesus walked the earth with creatures all creation needed to be celebrating his presence and reign. That task falls especially to humans as representatives of the whole creation and that is why Jesus responded as he did to the Pharisees. The exuberance and carefree joy of praise are fully appropriate responses when creatures are in the presence of their creator and redeemer. When absent, he is the one they most profoundly long for—with groans too deep for words.⁴¹

Conclusion

What I have tried to show in this paper is that a biblical conception of creation in its relationship with God provides an understanding of humanity in its relationship with the non-human creation and that these biblically conceived relationships provide fruitful ways of both understanding and responding to the current ecological crisis. Before turning briefly and specifically to what I understand a biblically formed Christian response might be, I want to make a few further observations about western culture.

The modern dualistic way of conceiving nature and history is in large measure responsible for the ecological crisis. Furthermore, it is hypocritical of late modern thinkers to place the blame for current ecological degradation on ancient traditions, the perspectives and the authority of which were rejected by early modern thinkers. “Modern secularism cannot simultaneously pride itself in its emancipation from religious ties and load the responsibility for the consequences of its absolutization of earthly acquisitiveness on those religious origins from

whose restrictions it has freed itself."⁴² It is highly significant to note that an atheistic commitment lies at the origins and the theoretical heart of modern western culture. That is to say, modernity has determined to use human rationality without reference to God as the means to understand and relate to the non-human world. When this commitment and self-assertion is seen in light of the biblical tradition, as I have tried to lay it out in this paper, it can be judged as a refusal to acknowledge and worship God. It is, judged biblically, a form of idolatry.

The biblical answer to recognition of sin is that repentance is called for. However, it is not my purpose to speak of the need of westerners generally to repent. It is, rather, most important that we consider the role of Christians in this story. Christians have, as we have seen, a considerable responsibility for developments in the western world. The wars of religion, with all the divisions, hatreds and intolerances they entailed, lay in the background of the European Enlightenment. There is a desperate need for Christians of all denominations to repent of the internecine divisions and strife which have negatively impacted various historical developments and continue to prevent people from acknowledging God (John 17). The problem is no longer limited to the western nations. The historical roots, however, of the global capitalist economy of consumption are western.

Secondly, there is a need for Christians to acknowledge their complicity with the dualism and rapacious growth-oriented investment and consumerism of western culture. Christians have sought to justify their continued existence, in the context of an often hostile culture, by taking on far too many of the unbiblical and even antibiblical concepts and practices of that culture. This too calls for repentance. However, it may first be necessary somehow to become aware of how deeply the modern west has shaped the churches within its context. One of these developments in Christian theology is the justification—by a particular kind of eschatology—of a very negative attitude toward this world. Christians need to develop an eschatology that leads neither to an instrumentalization nor, in extreme cases, a hatred of this life. To demean this life and this world entails a failure to acknowledge that God is not only the Redeemer, but is the Creator. We need a stronger theology of creation than we have been able to develop in the context of a scientific perspective on the world.

Thirdly, it is highly significant that we recognize that the impact of idolatrous behavior is never simple. Disregard for God coupled with acquisitiveness and consumerism have a devastating impact on the world—both human and non-human. Environmental degradation is merely one very serious symptom of the sinfulness of contemporary culture—in which many western Christians participate. Unjust international structures, militarily, politically and economically, are another aspect of human greed and lust for power. We in the West must acknowledge our participation in these unjust structures. If our ministry intends to be attentive to the poor and marginalized, then all of these factors need to be seen and addressed. It is my suggestion that the first, but not the only, task for western Christians, is the task of self-examination and then repenting as needed. Repentance is, of course, a change in behavior. I have identified acquisitiveness and consumerism along with the attitudes and commitments that define them as core sins of contemporary culture.⁴³ I have also suggested that a theology of God that duly recognizes him as the Creator is part of the answer.

Finally, I want very briefly to suggest that for Christians there are at least two reasons that the answer we develop cannot be a set of rules and guidelines. First, Kant's objection to the immaturity of reason's submission to heteronomous authorities needs to be considered. It is futile to attempt to return to those pre-Enlightenment modes of moral thinking that our early modern ancestors found so dangerous. Let us not attempt to tell (command) adults to obey simply because the Bible says so. Truth is worth obeying. However, it must be truth that wins the heart and mind to itself. This much of the Enlightenment's valuation of reason should be preserved. It corresponds to the Apostle Paul's objections to submitting again to all kinds of laws and regulations. Paul's insight, received from God, is that the love of God is the ultimate truth. It is when the Holy Spirit fills Paul with love that Paul is able to love God wholeheartedly and is able to love all of God's creatures in the power and gentle appropriateness of that love.

Notes

1. John Stott, "Foreword," *The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action*, ed. R. J. Berry (Leicester: IVP, 2000), p. 7.
2. Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," *Science*, vol. 155 (March, 1967), pp. 1203-1207.
3. "Christianity must incorporate environmental concern. But it can only do so by jettisoning a significant part of its most holy scriptures, and looking for inspiration elsewhere." Paul Harrison, "The Bible and the Environment: From Dominion to Destruction." <http://members.aol.com/pantheism0/ethicenv.htm> (30/6/1997).
4. As reported by R.J. Berry, *Care of Creation*, p. 15. The consultation series was entitled "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" and culminated at Seoul, Korea in March 1990. Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 38-48, 112f. is a prominent example of a theologian who rejects the biblical account of creation and the biblical understanding of humans. Although I won't refer to McFague's work, my essay is very much at odds with certain aspects of her theology. See Scott Hoezee, *Remember Creation: God's World of Wonder and Delight* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 62f. (and see pp. 48-50) for a brief summary and critique of those who reject the Genesis account of creation and of humanity in particular. Hoezee, in the same book, makes positive use of aspects of McFague's thought (see pp. 31, 34-36, 72, 90-91). For a critique of McFague's "metaphorical" use of Scripture, see Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991), pp. 289, 301f.
5. Berry, *Care of Creation*, p. 28.
6. All scripture quotations are taken from the RSV.
7. Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" trans. Mary C. Smith. <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html> (n.d.).
8. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT, 1985), pp. 27-35, 72.
9. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. MacPherson (New York: Penguin 1951). Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957).
10. George Grant, *English-Speaking Justice* (Toronto: Anansi, 1974), pp. 58f.
11. Ernst Troeltsch, *Historicism and Seine Probleme*, vol. 3, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), p. 9.
12. Franz Baader, *Über den Zwiespalt des religiösen Glaubens und Wissens*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt, 1958), p. 49, as cited by Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), p. 27.
13. Cornelius A. Buller, *The Unity of Nature and History in Pannenberg's Theology* (Lanham: Littlefield Adams Books, 1996), pp. 7-13.
14. For an account of the impact of Bacon's thought on the scientific domination of nature, see William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (New York: Braziller, 1972), pp. 51-58, 71.
15. C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (London: HarperCollins, 1943), p. 46. Related issues are the relationship in the modern period of men to women and of European men to non-European men.
16. Kurt Koch, "Der Mensch und seine Mit-Welt als Schöpfungs-Ebenbild Gottes: Schöpfungstheologische Aspekte der menschlichen Verantwortung für die Natur," *Catholica: Vierteljahresschrift für Kontroverstheologie* 42/1 (1988): 36-37 and Moltmann, *God in Creation*, pp. 13f.

17. E.g., Peter S. Wenz, *Environmental Ethics Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 198, 212ff.
18. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1954), pp. 144ff. Nietzsche is sharply critical of those who hate this world for the sake of heaven. While the relationship of eschatology to dualism is too complex a question to address in this paper, it may be said that the "hatred" of this world is neither an original nor a necessary correlate of either Christian or Jewish eschatology.
19. In brief, the hypothesis holds that the earth is one living being named Gaia (an ancient Greek goddess) or Mother Earth. Individuals are likened to individual cells of an organism. For a fuller, but still brief account of this hypothesis see Wenz, *Environmental Ethics*, pp. 135ff.
20. E.g., Bronislaw Szerszynski, "The Metaphysics of Environmental Concern—A Critique of Ecotheological Antidualism," *Studies in Christian Ethics*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1993), pp. 67–70.
21. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Toward a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith*, ed. Ted Peters (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), pp. 73–75 and Erazim Kohák, *The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 76–85.
22. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1954), p. 95.
23. C.S. Lewis envisioned a regenerate science which "would not do even to minerals and vegetables what modern science threatens to do to man himself" (*Abolition of Man*, p. 47).
24. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 203. See Buller, *Unity of Nature and History*, pp. 150ff., for a more extensive argument of this same point and for a consideration of the broader biblical context. Holmes Rolston III, *Genes, Genesis and God: Values and Their Origins in Natural and Human History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 222ff.
25. "[C]reation aims from the very beginning at the differentiated communion of God with human beings in particular and with creatures in general, and thus at the knowledge of God and of creation." Michael Welker, "Creation: Big Bang or the Work of Seven Days?" *Theology Today*, vol. 52 (1985), p. 184. Humans are to bring all creation's praises of the Creator to their fullest and most conscious expression (Buller, *Unity of Nature and History*, pp. 70–72, 160).
26. This point is strengthened if we also take note that the culmination of creation is not the sixth but is the seventh day—the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day for rest but also a day for relationship with God the Creator. Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 31.
27. It seems significant that the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3) is paralleled in the Enlightenment turn from God and tradition to rational knowledge. Just as the earth was cursed as a result of original sin (Gen. 3), so the earth has been cursed by modern sin. The dualism of modernity might be thought of as a rejection of the physicality of human existence in favor of its spirituality (i.e., its rationality). The ecological crisis might in part be conceived as a counter-rejection that demands that humans acknowledge their physicality. This direction of thought requires further analysis than is possible in this paper.
28. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 204–207.
29. Welker, "Creation: Big Bang or the Work of Seven Days?" *Theology Today*, vol. 52 (1985), p. 184.
30. Lev. 20:22–24; 26:1–6, 18–20, 27–35, 40–42.
31. Deut. 19:10; Ps. 106:38; Isa. 24:7–23; Ezek. 9:9; 14:19; 36:18; Joel 3:19; Rev. 11:18.

32. Jeremiah 12:11 states, "The whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart." The passage implies that the people should see very clearly from the desolation of the land that they have incurred guilt. Jer. 12:1-4; 16:18 and Ezek. 13; 15:8 show that the sins of idolatry and the oppression of people are at the root of the desolation that falls on the land.

33. N. Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1994), p. 167. Lohfink argues that the blessings of Genesis 1:28 are shown to be fulfilled partially when the Israelites *subdue* Canaan (Josh. 18:1) and that each of the nations of the earth must subdue their own territory.

34. Buller, *Unity of Nature and History*, p. 156.

35. See C.S. Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, pp. 34-37. Lewis points out that the domination of nature is really a power sought for the purpose of profiting from the domination of other humans.

36. See 2 Chron. 7:14; Isa. 26: 40-42.

37. George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p. 118, and John J. Collins, "Some Remaining Traditio-Historical Problems in the Testament of Moses," in *Studies on the Testament of Moses*, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, 4 (Cambridge: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), pp. 40ff. Both Collins and Nickelsburg point out the Deuteronomic character of the structure of the story. It also reflects the structure of the Psalms of lament. See Pss. 74 and 77 for example. Psalm 74 in particular includes themes of creation and of the rule of God over creation. Cf. Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), pp. 169, 201.

38. 2 Macc. 7:37f. Cf. 4 Macc. 6:27-30; 9:24; 17:10, 22; 18:4. Testament of Moses 9:7. See Ulrich Kellermann, "Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Problem des stellvertretenden Sühnetodes in 2Makk 7, 37f," *Bibliche Notizen: Beiträge zur exegetischen Diskussion* 13 (1980), pp. 75-77. 2 Macc. 10:1-8 describes Judas Maccabeus cleansing the land by a removal of the elements of pagan worship.

39. This is a complex and controversial topic that I cannot deal with adequately in this context. The destruction of the old has been nearly explicit in some of the texts cited above (e.g., Isa. 24). The "Day of the LORD" also contains at least seeds of the idea of the ultimate destruction of this earth (see, for example, Isa. 66:16 which is followed in v. 22 by the promise of new heavens and a new earth and 1 Cor. 15:35-54, which makes explicit the end of human life as we know it). And yet the new is seen as the completion of the old and the telos for which the old was longing (see Rom. 8:18-39).

40. 1 Enoch 91:15ff. and Jubilees 23:22-32 make similar promises, although in the context of this earth being renewed by God.

41. Pss. 19; 104; 114; 148. Also relevant are Jesus' words about joyful celebration in the presence of the bridegroom versus mourning and fasting in his absence (Matt. 9:14-15).

42. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie*, Band 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), p. 234 as cited and translated by Buller, p. 152. The standard translation is found in Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, p. 204.

43. The remarkable current interest in the prayer of Jabez (1 Chron. 4:10) hopefully is not another example of people colonizing religion for prosperity's sake. Bruce Wilkinson, *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2000).

Human Dignity in an Oppressive World

Trevor Tuck

Introduction

The title of this paper suggests that every individual member of the human race should be accorded dignity and that this necessary affirmation of each person's personal worth takes place in the context of an oppressive world.

This fundamental idea was doubtless on the mind of Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) when he penned the following extract from the original draft of the American Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776:

We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable; that all men are created equal and independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life and the pursuit of happiness.

Almost two centuries later it was the tension between this high ideal and the sad realities of a world emerging from the devastation of the Second World War, that led to the adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris on 10 December 1948. This watershed document which sounded a clarion call for the recognition of human dignity and rights for all the peoples of the world and which, in one of

the world's darkest hours, sounded a note of confidence and optimism, begins its preamble as follows:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world¹

It goes on to state, in its first article, the fundamental truth that:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.²

In December 1998, on the fiftieth anniversary of this declaration the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared: Today, we honor the highest of human aspirations and renew our promise to conquer the worst of human cruelty.³

This was a timely word of commitment and hope as the intervening years had given witness to a global inability to uphold the dignity and rights of people often resulting in repression and tyranny and the accompanying rise of civil rights movements or, in other cases, open revolution.

Some Personal Parameters

It is necessary for me to point out that I have approached the subject of this paper within some personally-imposed parameters because, while our subject has obvious and far-reaching international implications, I believe that *global problems* need to be examined and addressed in the perspective of *particular situations*.

Our focus will thus be on South Africa, the land of my birth and the land which after centuries of colonial domination and almost half a century of apartheid oppression, has been liberated and is on the journey toward the great ideal which was defiantly and prophetically verbalized by Nelson Mandela at the Rivonia trial when he was sentenced to life imprisonment in April 1964:

I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.⁴

Speaking almost thirty years later at the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony, the renegade prisoner who was destined to become the revered president declared:

This must be a world of democracy and respect for human rights, a world freed from the horrors of poverty, hunger, deprivation and ignorance, relieved of the threat and the scourge of civil wars and external aggression and unburdened of the great tragedy of millions forced to become refugees. The processes in which South Africa and Southern Africa as a whole are engaged beckon and urge us all that we take this tide at the flood and make this region a living example of what all people of conscience would like the world to be.⁵

The first democratic election that followed shortly thereafter in April 1994, now exactly seven years ago, was the result of a long and difficult process of negotiation and took place under an interim Constitution. This relatively peaceful transition to democracy was hailed by many throughout the world as a modern miracle. For praying Christians within the country at the time it was without doubt nothing less than a Divine and miraculous answer to prayer.

So it seemed fitting to me that our specific focus should be on South Africa and it goes without saying that I will be speaking to you from my own personal experience and perspective.

Some South African Perspectives

In order to fully appreciate the new "one, sovereign democratic republic," referred to in Section 1 of the present (1996) Constitution of South Africa, it is necessary to understand something of her turbulent history and of the events that led up to the establishment of a democratic South Africa.

A Brief Historical Overview

Some believe that humankind had its earliest origins in Africa although the southern part of the continent was only touched by European influence when sea-faring explorers pioneered the sea route to India in the late fifteenth century. In 1652 the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment station in Table Bay (Cape Town) in order to provide fresh provisions to passing ships and five years later European settlers were granted farms in the vicinity of Cape Town.

The inevitable demand for labor led to the importation of slaves from East Africa, Madagascar and the Dutch East Indies.

Between 1688 and 1700 several hundred French Huguenots swelled the number of colonists when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes. These refugees were people of strong religious conviction and bore names now familiar in South Africa such as Roux, Lombard, De Villiers and Du Plessis.

It was inevitable that by the early 1700s colonists had begun to spread into the hinterland and that clashes firstly with the indigenous Khoisan and later with the Bantu-speaking peoples on the Eastern frontier and beyond created racial tension which was to set the pattern for future generations.

In 1795 the British occupied the Cape and after a brief reversion to the Dutch during the Napoleonic wars, the tip of Africa which, more than two hundred years earlier had been described by Sir Francis Drake as "the fairest cape in all the world," was retaken in 1806 enabling Britain to effectively control the sea route to the East.

As the result of an emigration scheme, around four thousand British settlers were deployed on the Eastern Cape frontier. The first party arrived in Algoa Bay (Port Elizabeth) on board the *Chapman* on 9 April 1820 with the others following over the next few months. This was in part an attempt to create a buffer between the Cape and the Xhosa-speaking peoples of the Eastern Cape and this led to much unrest and a series of bitter frontier wars.

Well beyond the presence of settlers, African societies were simultaneously undergoing radical upheavals during the early part of the nineteenth century. By the 1820s the Zulu King Shaka had conquered and assimilated several lesser chiefdoms, thereby establishing a highly organized military empire on the eastern coast of Natal with control over a considerable part of south-east Africa.

Between 1834 and 1840 some 15,000 colonists, mostly Boers, began a series of migrations northwards away from British control, historically known as the Great Trek. They trekked through the highveld and down into Natal, clashing with the powerful Zulu nation under the leadership of Dingane, the half-brother and successor of Shaka. This culminated in the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838, where the Zulus experienced a crushing defeat. The ascendancy of the Boers was to lead to the eventual establishment of the Boer Republics, most significantly the South African (Transvaal) Republic, established in 1852 under the presidency of Paul Kruger.

From 1860, indentured Indian laborers were imported to work the sugar plantations of Natal to be followed by many Indian traders. The Indian segment of the population experienced segregation and discrimination from the beginning and it was in South Africa that Mohandas Gandhi, as a young lawyer, developed his policy of passive resistance for which he was later to become famous in India.

In the late 1860s alluvial diamonds were discovered on the Vaal River and around 1870 dry diamond deposits led to the establishment of Kimberley, the first great industrial hub in Africa, built on the largest diamond deposit in the world. This created the huge De Beers monopoly under Cecil Rhodes, who used his financial power to become the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (1890–1896) from whence he ruthlessly extended British influence into what is now Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The imperialistic “Scramble for Africa” coincided with these mineral discoveries and led to the subjugation of independent states and chiefdoms in South Africa, notably the Zulu Kingdom as a result of the Anglo–Zulu War of 1879.

A few years later, on 4 March 1883, The Salvation Army “opened fire” in Cape Town with the pioneer party of Major and Mrs. Francis Simmonds and Lieutenant Alice Teager taking the city by storm and the work growing rapidly throughout the Cape Colony.

Further discovery of the world’s largest gold fields on the Witwatersrand (Transvaal Republic) in 1886 led to the founding of Johannesburg and of the modern South African state. This new found source of wealth also swelled the number of foreigners (*Uitlanders*) and precipitated the Anglo–Boer War (October 1899–May 1902) during which the Boers conducted a prolonged guerilla campaign before being forced to surrender as a consequence of Lord Kitchener’s scorched-earth policy, coupled with the results of his poor management of segregated concentration camps, in which some 26,000 Boer women and children and at least 14,000 people of color succumbed as a result of the appalling conditions.

In the years following the war the former Boer republics were granted self-government but with a whites-only franchise. This was a period which was marked by the development of Afrikaner nationalism and politics with the Boer leaders, most notably Louis Botha, Jan Smuts and J.B.M. Hertzog assuming

important roles for the next fifty years. The colonies were finally united as a self-governing dominion called the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910, with the non-racial franchise being retained in the Cape but with a whites-only franchise implemented elsewhere and with Louis Botha as the first Prime Minister.

Segregation and Apartheid

In keeping with previous policies of segregation, the Union Government enacted the Black Land Act of 1913, thus creating reserves ("homelands") for black Africans and making land purchases or rented tenancy outside of these reserves illegal. Later legislation also entrenched skilled work for whites only and pass laws restricting movement of black Africans.

Despite these and other restrictions, South Africans of color became integrated into urban life and an educated elite of clerics, journalists, teachers and other professionals emerged to become a major force in black politics.

In 1912 the formation of the South African Native National Congress (which was renamed the African National Congress [ANC] in 1923) drew together traditional authorities and the educated black elite into one national political organization which in its earlier years was chiefly concerned with functioning as a pressure group through peaceful protest.

In 1921 the Communist Party emerged as an additional force for non-racialism and workers' rights.

The main white political parties joined forces in 1934 to combat the local effects of a global depression to form the United Party, thus spawning a new Afrikaner nationalist breakaway element under D.F. Malan, which became the Reunited National Party and which won the 1948 election on a platform of *apartheid* (separate development) and white supremacy, thus ushering in the most infamous period of South African history, which was to span the next 46 years.

The National Party government entrenched and expanded upon earlier segregationist laws and in fact introduced a system of legalized racism. In 1950 the Population Registration Act legally defined a person's position in society on the basis of skin color. Other acts passed were: the Mixed Marriages Act (1949), Group Areas Act (1950), Separate Amenities Act (1953), Bantu Education Act (1953) and Immorality Act (1957).

These developments were clearly out of step with the current process of decolonization and the global emphasis on human rights, a fact underlined by the February 1960 "Winds of Change" speech of the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to the South African Parliament. The government's response was to develop a policy of independent homelands, which was eventually responsible for the forced removal of well over three million people.

The Congress of the People in 1955 had drawn up a Freedom Charter embracing the principles of non-racialism and human rights, and which was founded on the holistic understanding of South Africa as a home for all who live in it, but this was met with strong resistance by the government, which exploded at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960 when police fired on a large crowd of anti-pass demonstrators leaving 69 dead and a further 180 wounded. This tragic incident was met with international outrage with thousands demonstrating in London and in 1961 South Africa became a Republic leaving the British Commonwealth.

Nelson Mandela, together with other young leaders of the *ANC*, joined with the Communist Party in 1961 to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation) exploding their first home-made bomb in a two year sabotage campaign as a last resort to bring the government to its senses. But the insanity continued, fueled by a blinded Afrikaner nationalist ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority undergirded by the misguided blessing of the narrow-minded unscriptural theology of the state church and the silence of the duped masses.

In 1963 the leaders of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* were apprehended at their secret headquarters in Rivonia near Johannesburg, with the ultimate sentencing of eight of the ten accused to life imprisonment, including in April 1964 Nelson Mandela, who was to remain in prison as a symbol of the freedom struggle for the next 27 years before his eventual release in February 1990.

Readers will doubtless be familiar with the more recent history of the last three decades with the resurgence of resistance politics in the 1970s, the June 1976 youth uprising in Soweto, the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement, which led to the death of Steve Biko while in detention in 1977, the imposition of international sanctions, the states of emergency, the superficial attempts at constitutional reform and the scrapping of legislation like the pass laws in the mid 1980s.

By the time F.W. de Klerk replaced P.W. Botha as State President in 1989 *apartheid* lay exposed to outside observers and to most South Africans as a racist ideology which was morally bankrupt, indefensible and impervious to reforms. In February 1990 de Klerk announced the unbanning of the liberation movements and the release of political prisoners, notably Nelson Mandela, a bold step which was recognized by the latter in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech as follows:

I would like to take this opportunity to join the Norwegian Nobel Committee and pay tribute to my joint laureate, Mr. F.W. de Klerk. He had the courage to admit that a terrible wrong had been done to our country and people through the imposition of the system of apartheid. He had the foresight to understand and accept that all the people of South Africa must, through negotiations and as equal participants in the process, together determine what they want to make of their future.⁶

After many years of struggle, untold misery and loss of life, the cause of human rights and dignity finally triumphed and the country entered into a process of negotiation which culminated in the first free and democratic elections of April 1994.

A Democratic South Africa

The ANC emerged from the 1994 elections with a 62 percent majority due largely to the popular and charismatic leadership of Nelson Mandela, and the newly installed ANC-led government proceeded to launch initiatives designed to inspire national identity, reconciliation, reconstruction and development.

The Government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) focused on meeting the basic needs of disadvantaged communities, developing the country's human resources, building the economy and democratizing the State and society, while the 1995 Masakhane Campaign was aimed at facilitating the RDP with a distinct emphasis on payment for municipal and other services among communities which had previously adopted a stance of non-payment as a form of peaceful protest against the previous regime.

South Africans from differing backgrounds identified with the words of President Nelson Mandela at his inaugural speech when he declared:

The time for the healing of wounds has come. The moment to bridge the

chasms that divide us has come. The time to ... build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity—a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.⁷

The five year period of President Mandela's office was thus also marked by the constitution-making process, which produced a final Constitution which includes an extensive Bill of Rights. In order to ensure that the rights set out in this Bill—such as the rights to language, religion and culture—are protected, the Constitution also establishes a system of independent judiciary and other independent institutions such as the Human Rights Commission and the Commission on Gender Equality.

A new and common national identity was also promoted through the revision of existing national symbols and the implementation of new versions such as the new South African flag as early as April 1994, the composition of a new national anthem (in which our own Songster Leader (Professor) Mzilikazi Khumalo was invited to participate), and the new Coat of Arms which was made public much later—on 27 April 2000.

During these years of democratic change, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), under the chairmanship of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, sought to bring South Africans into an encounter with the past in order to “heal the wounds” and to construct a common future based on forgiveness. The Commission, the work of which was to span more than two years, convened for its first session in Cape Town on 16 December 1995, a national holiday, the Day of Reconciliation.

The task of the TRC was to facilitate the process whereby South Africans of diverse backgrounds could acknowledge their role in the violation of human rights or alternatively, tell their personal or communal stories of suffering and victimization during the dark years of apartheid.

The entire nation was both shocked and sanitized as they participated in the proceedings through national radio and television, and there were times when listeners and viewers could only bow their heads and weep together with the emotionally-disturbed chairman and the victims of “man's inhumanity to man,” the extent of which was being made public for the first time.

The churches were invited to make submissions to the TRC, and in June 1997

The Salvation Army was the first to do so, following the submission's formulation at the Territorial Executive Leaders Conference in March of the same year which had met under the leadership of the Territorial Commander, Commissioner Paul du Plessis.

This Executive Conference had been preceded by the October 1996 Territorial Congress conducted by General Paul Rader, during which a Cairn of Reconciliation with an inscribed Plaque of Reconciliation had been publicly dedicated and unveiled at the Carl Sithole complex in Soweto, and on the following Sunday a Book of Reconciliation, inscribed with the signatures of salvationists from throughout the Territory, was presented to the General in a moving public meeting.

The submission, with Commissioner Paul du Plessis and the Chief Secretary, Lt. Colonel William Mabena, as signatories, and with all the territorial and divisional leaders who were present at the March 1997 Conference as co-signatories, included the following statement:

By international policy the [Salvation] Army has refrained from political involvement, though seeking to condemn morally unacceptable practices. In 1986 our then General, Eva Burrows, issued a statement in London which clearly condemned apartheid. With people of all kinds of political persuasion in our ranks, we chose to remain silent, a sin of omission which we now deeply regret.⁸

Among other things, it also went on to openly confess: "While we did care for body and soul, we ought more strongly to have attacked the evil which wrecked both bodies and souls in the first place. Professing an apolitical stance, we used this to avoid the kind of protest for which the early Salvation Army was known,"⁹ and went on to state the commitment of The Salvation Army "to following through on the reconciliation process, to a balancing of the priestly and prophetic roles in ministry, to the just redistribution of resources in South Africa and to continue to offer pastoral care to the victims and perpetrators of apartheid-era crimes."¹⁰

On presenting the submission in the company of Commissioner Margaret du Plessis, Lt. Colonel William Mabena and Lt. Colonel Brian Tuck on 2 June 1997, the Territorial Commander made the following statement: "Whilst this submission is made by The Salvation Army in South Africa, it reflects also the opinion of the Army's international leadership. This could prove to be a significant development in the way salvationists world-wide approach justice issues."¹¹

When the TRC submitted the five volumes which comprise the Commission's *Report* to former President Mandela on 29 October 1998, over 29,000 stories of human rights violations had been received. More than 21,000 statements had been corroborated and victims referred to the Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation. In 1997 a President's Fund had been established with the help of overseas donors and local contributors to assist with compensation of victims, and in April 1998 regulations governing payments were promulgated with the result that by May 2000 more than R30 million had been disbursed. It had also received 7,124 applications for amnesty from perpetrators, based on full disclosure of human rights violations associated with political aims.

At the time of writing the Amnesty and Reparation & Rehabilitation Committees still continue their efforts to bring the valuable work of the Commission to a conclusion.

The Territorial Commander, Commissioner Israel L. Gaither, last year declared 17 December the first annual "Celebration of Reconciliation Observance" Sunday with appropriate resource material being prepared and used at corps and other centers with good effect, for reconciliation, like charity, must begin (and continue) "at home."

Current Challenges

The second democratic election took place on 2 June 1999, which saw the ANC increase its majority to almost two-thirds, with a decline in National Party support and growing support for the Democratic Party, which became the official opposition. This election also ushered in the post-Mandela era under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki.

Understandably, with its past history, there are many social and economic challenges confronting South Africa as it seeks to continue the process of building a new democratic country built on the recognition of the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-racial, multi-religious character of its peoples.

Many of these serious issues have been spoken of as "the legacy of apartheid" and while this may in many cases be true, there are those who feel that the country should be doing better after seven years of democracy. The fact is, South Africa is still a country in transition and The Salvation Army is seeking to make its unique contribution in the current situation.

Racism continues to raise its ugly head through racially-based crimes of violence and xenophobia directed towards illegal immigrants from neighboring states. To address these and related matters President Mbeki invited the Human Rights Commission to convene a National Conference on Racism which drew 1500 delegates during August/September 2000. This Conference produced the "South African Millennium Statement on Racism" with a call for a "Decade for National Mobilisation against Racism." While on this subject it is timely to mention that the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance has been scheduled to take place in Durban, South Africa 31 August to 7 September, 2001.

The high rate of crime is affecting South Africans directly and indirectly as potential investors choose to go elsewhere. With inadequate and crowded prisons and a judicial system in a process of transformation, criminals appear to be having a field day. The Army was well represented at a recent International Conference for Prison Chaplains and is taking steps to expand and strengthen its existing prison ministry.

While the previous government limited the death penalty to "an option in extreme cases" only, the present government has, in the current human rights culture, abolished the death penalty, but this remains a contentious issue particularly with the current high rate of violent crime.

Abortion which was previously illegal is now available on request in terms of The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 93 of 1996) for all women in the first 12 weeks (in certain cases 20 weeks) of pregnancy.

Violence against women together with child abuse and neglect are matters that scar the national consciousness and are unfortunately on the increase. The Army provides shelter, support and skills training for abused women and their children at several centers, of which Carehaven in the Cape is a good example. Education and support is also provided through the services of our Family Health Programme that is a function of the THQ Women's Department with coordinators in each division.

Child abuse and neglect is also a reality of community life. The Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998) was enacted to address the question of domestic violence against women and children.

In the context of a multi-faith society activities related to the occult have become acceptable providing no criminal acts are perpetrated. The inexplicable number of children who simply disappear is without question a factor in this scenario. A special Police Unit to investigate occult-related crime has been in existence for some years already. The Army is actively involved in issues related to Child Care through its Social Welfare Department links and its several Homes for Children in particular.

Despite The Code of Conduct for Public Servants promulgated in 1997, corruption at all levels of government administration continues to be a matter of grave concern. Along with other church leaders and public figures, the Army participated in the National Anti-Corruption Summit, which was aimed at providing a coordinated response to the issue of corruption.

In the hope of generating R14 billion over the next five years, the Government has legalized gambling by promulgating the National Gambling Act (Act 33 of 1996). Large casinos and hotel slot machines are now part of everyday life, and a National Lottery was launched in March, 2000 with over 500,000 tickets being sold on the first day. The Army opposed this step and has since issued a statement indicating that it will not apply for funds raised through gambling as some charities are doing.

Other pressing issues too numerous to mention in detail include the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS, the growing gap between the rich and poor, inadequate housing and the burgeoning urban informal settlements with the need for basic services, the questions surrounding health services and an inadequate education system, the high rate of unemployment (a factor influencing the high crime rate), and last but not least, the need for aggressive people development, to name but a few.

The Salvation Army in South Africa is committed to contribute to positive change both through its various ministries at grassroots level and through its presence and participation in national bodies such as the South African Council of Churches of which it is a full member.

It would be remiss of me if I did not pause to acknowledge, with much gratitude and on behalf of the beneficiaries, those individuals and territories who generously provide and faithfully facilitate support for the many and varied community projects within the Southern Africa Territory. A heartfelt thank you!

Some Challenging Principles

It is not surprising that the South African experience has caught the imagination of the world and many share the sentiment of Nelson Mandela when he said, "We live with the hope that as she battles to remake herself, South Africa will be like a microcosm of the new world that is striving to be born."¹²

I wish therefore to suggest a few emerging principles which, in my opinion challenge us and seem to be calling out for our attention as we seek, under God, to shape the future of The Salvation Army and of our world in the 21st century.

Anything Is Possible

The world, as the title of this paper suggests, is indeed an oppressive environment and there is no question that the rights and dignity of people are being violated on a daily basis in many and varied situations and in every country.

The English poet Francis Quarles (1592–1644) spoke of man as "Heaven's masterpiece," a fact not yet appreciated, for, as Winston Churchill pointed out, "The power of man has grown in every sphere except over himself." As in the days of William Booth when a cab-horse was accorded more dignity than the "submerged tenth" of darkest England, so today the precious dignity of men, women, boys and girls has become the soiled currency of the greedy and the unscrupulous.

In some countries and situations the position appears to be hopeless and the perpetrators beyond redemption, but the good news is—if South Africa can change, anything is possible!

There are thousands of stories, some only now emerging of the faithful in Christ who, in the darkest days of apartheid, refused to believe that God would not answer their prayers or honor their witness and although the cost was extremely high, their persistence won the ultimate victory.

The old chorus "God is still on the throne and He will remember His own" is more true than most of us imagine!

Everyone Is Accountable

The second principle is one which I believe needs to be clearly understood and relates to our clear failure over many years to challenge, in the name of God, the evils of apartheid.

It is not acceptable to simply remain silent in the face of blatant evil when we have the God-given power, authority and influence to be active agents of change and there is no doubt that in South Africa we became captives of our own pietistic tradition which made us believe that it would somehow be sinful to challenge an earthly authority. The failure was in not recognizing that the injunction of Romans 13 needed to be balanced with Revelation 13 and that authority should not be confused with tyranny.

The great Methodist saint, W.E. Sangster wrote the following in 1954:

More common, and more confusing than quietism, is pietism. The hundred different forms it takes all have this in common: that it is a mental withdrawal from the world of organised, active men. It differs from quietism in that, so far from disparaging 'good works,' it is often most zealous in them, but they are always obviously religious good works: battles against drunkenness, immorality, and Sabbath desecration; and splendid service to the sick, the orphan, and the unmarried mother.

But the world, as the world, they withdraw from. Its rule and organisation is alien to them. Often they decline to vote in local or Parliamentary elections. They do not see the possibility of God's rule in this terrestrial order at all ... A Hitler may arise in their country, or a Stalin. It does not matter. It is not their business. God will deal with both in His own way and in His own time ... and without their aid.¹³

So yes, I believe we failed; but the lesson is clear and it is not necessary to perpetuate our failure either in the new South Africa or in the international arena where in many places The Army's voice and action is needed. Everyone is accountable.

In a recent edition of *The Citizen* newspaper it was reported that thousands of children, some as young as 10, are serving with armed forces and militia groups in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁴ The report arose out of a conference held in Amman which was attended by more than 100 government and military officials with representatives from the United Nations and non-governmental organizations—Everyone is accountable. How sad that the National Council of Churches in India, as recorded by Commissioner Margaret du Plessis in *Global Exchange*, had to issue their 1999 statement which I quote in part:

It is unfortunate that women experience various forms of violence and

oppression in our so called free and democratic society, such as infanticide, rape, wife battering, sexual abuse, harassment, bride-burning, dowry deaths. The Church and society tends to be complacent and insensitive to the miseries of women.¹⁵

And, again I say—Everyone is accountable. And what shall we say about the poor, who, as our Lord indicated “will always be with us”? While we would not dispute their inevitable presence among us, their growing numbers must be our concern particularly if this is the result of structural injustice.

As the “North and South” divide gets increasingly wider, the Conference due to take place in Bangladesh in November 2001 is to be welcomed and some action-orientated recommendations eagerly anticipated.

It was most encouraging to read in the USA *War Cry* that the National Commander, Commissioner John Busby, was a co-signatory to a letter addressed to President George W. Bush on the important subject of American foreign policy regarding issues like genocide in Africa, mass religious persecution in China, and the trafficking of women and children into the international sex trade in the former Soviet Union and Asia.¹⁶

I doubt if anyone would disagree that we need to do more of this prophetic ministry.

The ministry of the Christian church is “holistic.” Its mission is to bring all of the Gospel (the whole truth) to all people in all of the world, and to teach them to obey all of God’s commandments (Matt. 28). The good news should everywhere be heard against the background of the bad news of society. The ministry of justice goes against all injustice, in whatever form, and in whatever circles, not necessarily in spectacular programmes, but everywhere where Christians live, speak and do what is right. Naturally it will be unpopular. Those especially who benefit by the unjust structures or actions will not exactly welcome intrusion into this area. It will also be an area where mistakes will be made, but if done in a spirit of humility and love this prophetic ministry will be blessed by the Lord.¹⁷

It must be said that prophets are prone to “lose their heads” as did John the Baptist or, for that matter their external funding, but that is not their concern providing they uphold God’s kingdom principles.

Traditionalism Is Expendable

And now a particular word to those of us who belong to the regiment of the “yellow, red and blue.”

Some among us would be quick to point out that many of the recent changes to *Orders and Regulations* were overdue and have been well received simply because such matters as gender equality, flexible training, consultative leadership, marriage and engagement, for example, touch on the dignity and worth of the individual.

It is clear that an organizational structure such as ours, which is fundamentally and historically militaristic and which has thus tended to be autocratic in style, has had and still has the inherent danger of abusing the dignity of a person in the name of the God who bestowed such dignity. To have to work and minister in an oppressive world is part of any salvationist's vocation but to be, even in the worst circumstances, "oppressed in the house of your friends" is counter-productive, and recent efforts to promote and encourage the biblical principles of servant leadership should be warmly welcomed and exemplified at all levels of leadership.

But this potential danger has implications beyond the individual in our ranks. It extends to the corporate life of God's Army, and like other insidious forms of injustice that rob people of their dignity, it has a tendency to become imbedded in attitudes and in "the way we do things," which in turn can become traditional and beyond change. If we are not careful, such attitudes and systems can negatively impact the corporate dignity of a corps, social services center, department or even a headquarters at any level. As long as there is someone on one level of administration "in charge" of someone else on another, the possibility for paternalistic assumptions and restrictive controls are real and must be recognized and aggressively eradicated if we are serious about this question of human dignity. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain deceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3).

It is out of concern for the mission in which we are all partners with Christ, and from the "South African experience" that I highlight this third principle—traditionalism is expendable, but human dignity is not!

Therefore, before we boldly address the world at large on any issues related to "human dignity in an oppressive world," I humbly suggest that some further personal and organizational introspection may well prove to be profitable. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6 :10).

In Conclusion

I still believe the simple truth of the old chorus "Take Jesus to all the world, He'll put things right"! To quote a well worn cliché, too often the "heart of the problem is the problem of the heart." It was certainly so with the scourge of apartheid.

Bishop Mvume Dandala, the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa, recently addressed a gathering of church leaders on the subject of Church Liturgy as follows:

In the black community many of us co-operated and benefited from apartheid and many white people refused to be part and parcel of apartheid and tried to live differently. I would like our compassion (through the liturgy) to be undergirded with words like "... and help us Lord never to fall again into the same sin." Our children will become heirs of this forgiveness because of our confession and repentance.¹⁸

The highest recognition of human dignity that can be bestowed upon a fellow human being is the sharing of Christ's offer of redeeming and sanctifying grace, for it presents that individual with the opportunity to regain God's character of self-renouncing love which willingly puts its human dignity aside and in the eternal interests of others "takes the very nature of a servant" and "becomes obedient" to the divine will of God, regardless of the personal consequences (Phil. 2:5-11).

The way to true human dignity is, without doubt, the self-denying way of the cross. Commissioner Edward Read has wisely reminded us:

An experience of sanctification does not dehumanize anyone, but rather releases him to a more thoroughly *human* existence. If Jesus is the ideal Man, it follows that the holy life is the truly normal human life ... "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17)—with a nature neither angelic nor animal but *human*.¹⁹

I close with this paradoxical, yet holy and dignified thought.

Notes

1. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," www.un.org/rights/50/decla.htm.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Kofi Annan, "Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," www.un.org/Docs/SG/quatable/6827.htm.
4. Nelson Mandela, "I am prepared to die" (statement from the dock at the opening of the defense case in the Rivonia Trial, Pretoria Supreme Court, 20 April 1964), www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/rivonia.html.
5. Mandela, Nelson. "Nobel Peace Prize Address," www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/nobelnrm.html.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Nelson Mandela, "Statement at his inauguration as President of the Democratic Republic of South Africa," www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/inaugpta.html.
8. "Submission by The Salvation Army to the Truth Commission," *The War Cry*, Southern Africa Territory (Special Supplement, 7 June 1997).
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10. *Ibid.*
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12. Nelson Mandela's Nobel Peace Prize Address, Oslo, Norway, 10 December 1993.
13. W.E. Sangster, *The Pure in Heart* (London: The Epworth Press, 1954), pp. 117-118.
14. "Bid to protect child soldiers," *The Citizen*, 9 April 2001.
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16. "Idealism without Illusions," *The War Cry*, USA (3 March 2001), pp. 12-13.
17. J.J. Kritzing, P.G.J. Meiring & W.A. Saayman, *On Being Witnesses* (Orion Publishers, 1994), p. 146.
18. "Dandala Urges South Africans to Own the Past and Suggests a Change in Church Liturgy," *The New Dimension* (March/April 2001).
19. Edward Read, *Studies in Sanctification* (Toronto: The Salvation Army, 1975), p. 52.

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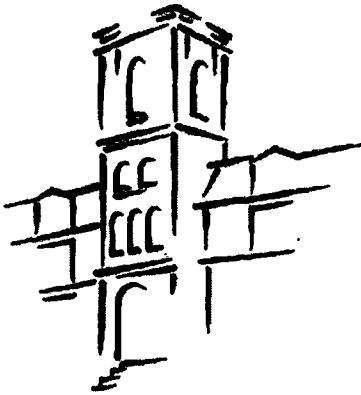
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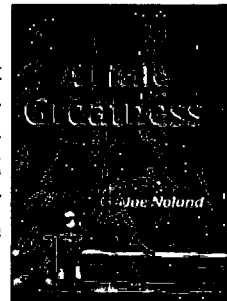


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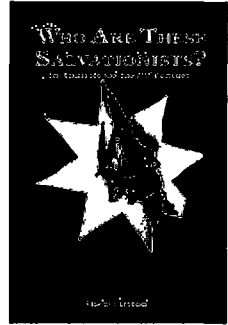


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