Time for Love - A Response

First impressions of this documentary (that is what it calls itself) are that it is first rate, well produced, and with a suitably beguiling sound track (music by Ludovico Einaudi, by any chance). As far as the medium of 'talking heads' go, it seeks to present a biblical case for at least same-sex blessings and ideally for same-sex marriage. Its avowed audience furthermore are those who seek themselves to acknowledge a high view of biblical authority. Does it achieve its goals? Apart from dispelling the usual miscues sometimes/often paraded in these discussions (e.g. the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen 19), frankly, in my opinion, no; it fails. Not only did we not actually hear new ground being broken here, the old arguments assembled via an array of interviewees continue finally not to convince. And it fails to convince for a number of reasons, some specifically and others cumulatively. We shall take some specific reasons first.

Part I

Curiously, focusing attention in the NT only on the text of Romans 1 and skirting around 1 Corinthians 6 is a serious mistake. For when they speak of "scholars" and "scholarship" - which high ground is often claimed - any due "interpretation" of 1 Cor 6:9-11 may not be avoided, as if it were merely one's benighted failure to translate a couple of words 'correctly'. Why else might Tony Thiselton, in his magisterial The New International Greek Testament Commentary series from Eerdmans, 2000, offer "an extended note" (pages 440-455), in which he covers not only lexicographical material but an entire hermeneutical methodology? As he summarizes (p.450):

> The issue does not turn in fact on whether a link can be traced between Lev 18:22 (and 20:13) and 1 Cor 6:9–10, but on whether Paul sees the OT origins entirely through the lenses of hellenistic Jewish recontextualizations in terms of Graeco-Roman society, or whether he interprets the OT as Christian scripture offering direct paradigms for the habituated lifestyle and ethics of God's holy people as a corporate identity.

Nor is Thiselton alone with such a view:

> Paul seems to have translated and transferred the basic disciplinary norms of Israel's covenant community over onto the church at Corinth. ... Paul in effect addresses the Gentile Corinthians *as* Israel. God's word to Israel has become God's word directly to them. The scriptural command with which Paul closes the chapter culminates his treatment of the incest problem [ch.5] and discloses the fundamental theological basis for his directions to the Corinthians. Sinful behavior of this sort cannot be allowed to corrupt God's elect covenant community.[1]

That is, we are not merely dealing with some kind of transposed general "vice-list"; we are dealing with a Christianized rabbi and apostle, who is steeped in the OT Scriptures and their interpretation, and who applies all this to the Messianic community of new believers. In fact,

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[1] Richard Hays, *First Corinthians*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (WJKP, 1997), p.173, emphasis original.

a good parallel is this from NT Wright's book on Paul re 1 Cor 8:1-6, where the founder of the Corinthian church so naturally revamps the Jewish *Shema*.

> To pray the *Shema* was to embrace the yoke of God's kingdom, to commit oneself to God's purposes on earth as in heaven, whatever it might cost. It was to invoke, and declare one's loyalty to, the One God who had revealed himself in action at the Exodus and was now giving his people their inheritance. Paul uses the *Shema* in this passage in exactly this way, not as a detached statement of dogma, not as a 'spiritual' aside, not simply in order to swat away the 'many "gods" and many "lords"' of the previous verse, but in order to be *the foundation for the community which is living, or which Paul is teaching to live, as the kingdom–people in the midst of the pagan world*."[2]

As for how Romans 1 is dealt with, again there is a curiosity. For why one minute might we be reading Paul "rhetorically" (at 1:26-27), and so not seemingly, literally, "at his word", but then suddenly switch at "2:1" to take him "seriously"? True; Rom 1:18ff *is* part of an entire rhetorical argument. The string of   words (Rom 1:9,11,16,17,18 & 20), leading up to the start of 2:1with   , is telling. But the argument *doesn't **stop*** at the end of chapter 1; it runs all the way to its climax in 3:26. Consequently, there is no place for "law/*torah*" "boasting", and the example of Abraham's "faith", rather than *torah* performance, closes it off (3:27-4:25). If it's "scholars and scholarship" that are to be invoked, there are countless contrary views to those presented, which are truly rather weak, readily to hand.

For once more again, we need to invoke not just the Greco-Roman setting of rhetoric and/or culturally perceived vices, but the essential OT worldview of ***false worship***, as construed for example in Wisdom 13 and from Genesis 1 itself. Just so, we have this reconstructed table before us,[3] as Paul clearly had in view the creation texts in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 behind his two main indictments of homosexual practice, Romans 1:24-27, since there are eight points of correspondence, in a similar tripartite structure, between Romans 1:23, 26-27 and Genesis 1:26-27: human, image, likeness; birds, cattle, reptiles; male, female.

	Genesis 1:26-27	Romans 1:23, 26-27	
A. God's likeness and image in humans			
(1)	human (*anthropos*)	likeness (*homoioma*)	(3)
(2)	image (*eikon*)	image (*eikon*)	(2)
(3)	likeness (*homoiosis*)	human (*anthropos*)	(1)
B. Dominion over the animal kingdom			
(4)	birds (*peteina*)	birds (*peteina*)	(4)
(5)	cattle (*ktene*)	quadrupeds (*tetrapoda*)	(5)
(6)	reptiles (*herpeta*)	reptiles (*herpeta*)	(6)
C. Male-female differentiation			
(7)	male (*arsen*)	females (*theleiai*)	(8)
(8)	female (*thelus*)	males (*arsenes*)	(7)

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[2]   Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Fortress, 2013), "The One God of Israel, Freshly Revealed", p.663 (emphasis added).

[3]   I am indebted to Robert Gagnon for this table.

All of which makes Peter Lineham's remarks in the documentary around 15:45 curious: why do the opening two chapters of Genesis NOT settle the matter - *especially* when Paul refers back to them here in Rom 1, as does Jesus as well in Matt 19 and Mark 10?

Part II

One could continue with addressing elements of specific detail, but we need to move on to more general features of the documentary. We begin by picking up a key feature of the discussion, applying the very "reframing"sought by the presenters, which throws up a vital clue to what is truly at stake. Subsequently, a further consequence arises regarding the "justice" argument itself, as we shall see at our conclusion.

Tim Meadowcroft invokes during the course of one of his sessions (some 13 minutes in) a book entitled, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same Sex Relationships*. I wish to take up just such a challenge, while doing so in a far more radical way still. Two Basic Questions give us the way in.

1. How has it come about that the Church and the churches have among their members such overtly contradictory stances? On the one hand, there are those who clearly and unequivocally view any and all forms of homosexual practice to be sinful; and NB, this condemnation does not, nor should it, apply to homosexual people themselves, to those who deem themselves to be gay. Strictly, what is being condemned here is "homoeroticism". And then there are those on the other hand who wish to claim that gay "monogamous, faithful, life-long relationships" are "reasonable and holy" (Tobias Haller). Given this, furthermore, all such should receive the blessing of the Church, and/or even be granted the formal status of marriage.

1.1 In the case of the ACANZ&P, this stand off has been formulated in this subsidiary way, in Motion 30 which came before GS 2016 via the "Way Forward Group", that this church establish:

> (a) A process and structure by which those who believe the blessing of same-gender relationships is **contrary** *to* scripture, doctrine, tikanga or civil law, will not be required to perform any liturgy for the blessing of same-gender relationships, will continue to have *integrity* within the Church, and will remain compliant with the parliamentary legislation within any relevant jurisdiction;
> (b) A process and structure by which those who believe the blessing of same-gender relationships is **consonant** *with* scripture, doctrine, tikanga and civil law may perform a yet to be developed liturgy for blessing same-gender relationships in a manner which maintains their *integrity* within the Church, is compliant with the parliamentary legislation within any relevant jurisdiction, and can remain in communion under scripture, doctrine and law; including
> (i) A proposal for a new liturgy to bless right ordered same-gender relationships;
> (ii) A process and legislation (whether church or parliamentary) by which a new liturgy to bless right ordered same-gender relationships may be adopted."
> [emphases added; this process gave way to now Motion 29 for GS 2018, and the Working Group's Final Report. See

This first general Basic Question, and its local subsidiary form, is resolutely historical. What we need to delve into is the genealogy of *how it is*, over the decades and even centuries, we have reached the point we have, where, seemingly within one and same community (of the Church and many western churches), we have *such **diametrically opposed** stances*. Finally and crucially, these basic differences are not *adiaphora*; they are not incidental, but strike at the heart of the essential anthropological question of "human being" as we shall see.

2. The second Basic Question cuts *both* ways: how is it that people become genuinely mistaken? And here once more the emphasis is on the sheer historical process - "*becoming* mistaken".

At root therefore, these Two Basic Questions embark us on an engagement with how Theology and Culture interface, how they interact one with the other. I suggest this is what is underlying the reasons for our current stand-off in the Church, a failure to grapple with and resolve the dynamic between Culture and Christian Theology.[4]

My own attempt at an answer began in earnest in the mid 2000s with a paper subsequently published in Brian Edgar & Gordon Preece, eds, *Whose Homosexuality? Which Authority? Homosexual practice, marriage, ordination and the church* (ATF Press, 2006), pages 151-167. The title of the paper was, "Whose Language? Which Grammar? 'Inclusivity' and 'Diversity', versus the Crafted Christian concepts of Catholicity and Created Differentiation". The Australasian collection as a whole sought to promote a variety of perspectives and understandings of what they called a "double-bunger of an issue in the churches and society". It was a double issue of the journal *Interface*, being the fruit of a conference held in Melbourne in 2004, and was deliberately styled as a follow-up to an earlier collection from New Zealand, edited by Murray Rae and Graeme Redding, also published by ATF Press, in 2000. My own contribution sought to frame the debate in a way that delves far more deeply into the archaeology and genealogy of two key forms of discourse, which, it is claimed, are not only in the end incompatible, but which renders one as far more satisfactory and robust a form of discourse than the other.

I use Paul Hazard's classic text *La Crise de la conscience européenne*[5] from 1935 to demarcate the start, the French revolution to express the mass cultural face (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*), and the collapse of the Berlin Wall exactly 200 years later to delimit the close. Of course that is too neat. But the rise and development of these modernist traits demand attention, and evaluation what's more: 'tolerant' 'pluralistic' societies, where a fundamental chasm between the private and public is 'assumed' (Marx in his Early Writings was deeming this long before Newbigin[6]),

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4 The literature in this field is enormous. Most helpful as an introduction is the trilogy by James K A Smith, *Cultural Liturgies. Vol.1 Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Baker Academic, 2009), *Vol.2 Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Baker Academic, 2013), and *Vol.3 Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Baker Academic, 2017).

5 Abridged ET: *The European Mind 1680-1715* (Penguin, 1973).

6 The reference is to Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Eerdmans, 1986); idem., *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*

where 'values' and 'facts' respectively reside, and where pluralistic description gives way to 'pluralism' as a prescriptive *modus operandi*, arbitrated by a so-called 'neutral' ratio-legal bureaucracy[7] among the citizenry of a sovereign nation-state—all this is merely the cultural pond of the West, 'assumed' and 'obvious'. Yet it precisely here, with what we 'assume' so 'obviously' that we encounter our Theology/Culture interface.

Two maxims have driven my assessment of this tricky, hermeneutical concern:

1. The last creature to ask questions of the water is the fish.
2. The first time a fish knows itself to be the creature it is, is when it is caught and on dry land.

Essential to human being is the fact that we are cultural creatures/animals, creatures/animals who necessarily socially interact and further whose social interaction is also usually some form of interplay among nature, culture, and history. (However, even that very notion of 'nature' is itself a culturally mediated one, *viewing* 'nature' *as* such-and-so; just as 'history' is also socially mediated!)

> *A definition of culture*
> That set of **traits**, material and immaterial, **associated with** a specific people-group and their history and **crafted** via traditional and traditioning institutions,[8] all of which establishes/creates a particular **ethos** and **worldview**.

Human culture therefore is deliberately, carefully intentional - "crafted" - and even self-reflective. The degree to which it is the latter though has itself been the subject of cultural history - the "examined life" of Socrates; the emergence of 'psychology' via Augustine's *Confessions*; the 18th century's "turn to the human subject".

Culture is dependent upon predecessors and their manner of traditioning via communal practices. "Living traditions, just because they continue a not-yet-completed narrative, confront a future whose determinate and determinable character, so far as it possesses one, derives from its past." "The past has made available to the present certain future possibilities." "A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and

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(Eerdmans, 1989); idem., *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Eerdmans, 1991). Oliver O'Donovan has his own set of "traits" and their "evaluation" in *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the roots of political theology* (CUP, 1996), where he enjoins upon us to be "alert to the signs of the times [as] a Gospel requirement", p.273, the context being decisive. That is all I am seeking to do: to be "wise" (Matt 10) about "the redemption of society" (ch.7) and the Church's role as "salt" (Matt 5) in such a mission under God - *given our western history.*

[7]   Just so Weber, whose own distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is still most pertinent re legitimating forms of human sociality.

[8]   Institutions are established features of **society**. We need to acknowledge the relationship, and differences, between *culture* and *society*.

redefined." (Alasdair MacIntyre).[9]

Traits are both *material* - from clothes to cups, from aeroplanes to apple-carts, from huts to entire cities, from computers to chiselled stones - and *immaterial* - symbols, signs and ideas, and notably *language*, in whatever medium.

'People-with-a-history' normally determine the boundaries of any culture. But today we are seeing perhaps like never before the sheer permeability of most cultural boundaries such that it is almost impossible to cleave to any one cultural identity. There has arisen in our cosmopolitan world of the 21st C a certain plasticity to human identity.

All of which delivers a certain *ethos* and *worldview*, a set of "spectacles on the ends of our noses" (Karl Barth), by means of which we *view* **and** *evaluate* 'the world'. This notion of a worldview furthermore may be unpacked via those four features which Tom Wright offers in a section of his *The New Testament and the People of God* (SPCK, 1992), pages 122-143, entitled "Worldview and Theology".

> Worldviews have to do with the presuppositional pre-cognitive stage of a culture or society. Wherever we find the ultimate concerns of human beings, we find worldviews. From that point of view, as the echo of Paul Tillich in the phrase "ultimate concern" will indicate, they are profoundly theological, whether or not they contain what in modern Western thought would be regarded as an explicit or worked-out view of a god-figure. Worldview, in fact embraces all deep-level human perceptions of reality, including the question of whether or not a god or gods exist, and if so what he, she, it or they is or are like, and how such a being, or such beings, might relate to the world. Though the metaphor of sight can over-dominate (world *view*), the following analysis should make it clear that worldviews in the sense I intend, include many dimensions of human existence other than simply theory.
>
> There are four things which worldviews characteristically do, in each of which the entire worldview can be glimpsed. **First**, as we have seen throughout this Part of the book, worldviews provide the *stories* through which human beings view reality. Narrative is the most characteristic expression of worldview, going deeper than the isolated observation or fragmented remark.
>
> **Second**, from these stories one can in principle discover how to answer the basic *questions* that determine human existence: who are we, where are we, what is wrong, and what is the solution? All cultures cherish deep-rooted beliefs which can in principle be called up to answer these questions. All cultures (that is) have a sense of identity, of environment, of a problem with the way the world is, and of a way forward - a redemptive eschatology, to be more precise - which will, or may, lead out of that problem. To recognize this in relation to cultures can be as

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[9] Alasdair MacIntyre's trilogy is: *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, 1981/84/2007), *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, 1988), and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Duckworth, 1990). The best introduction to his work remains Christopher Stephen Lutz, *Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's* After Virtue (Continuum, 2012).
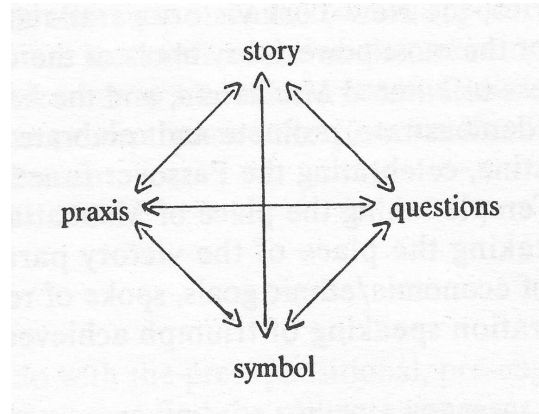
enlightening as to recognize that another human being within one's own family or circle of acquaintance has a different personality-type from one's own. It liberates all concerned from the constricting assumption that we all are, or should be, exactly alike.

Third, the stories that express the worldview, and the answers which it provides to the questions of identity, environment, evil and eschatology, are expressed in cultural *symbols*. These can be both artifacts and events - festivals, family gatherings, and the like. In modern North America, the New York victory parade after a successful war brings together two of the most powerful symbols of the culture: the towering skyscrapers of business-orientated Manhattan, and the heroes of battle. Both, in their own fashion, demonstrate, promote and celebrate The American Way. In first-century Palestine, celebrating the Passover functioned similarly, with Jerusalem and the Temple taking the place of Manhattan, and the Passover sacrifice and meal taking the place of the victory parade. The buildings, instead of speaking of economic/ethnic goals, spoke of religious/ethnic ones; instead of the celebration speaking of triumph achieved over the forces of darkness, it spoke of vindication yet to come. All cultures produce and maintain such symbols; they can often be identified when challenging them produces anger or fear. Such symbols often function as social andf or cultural boundary-marken: those who observe them are insiders, those who do not are outsiders. And these symbols, as the acted and visible reminders of a worldview that normally remains too deep for casual speech, form the actual grid through which the world is perceived. They determine how, from day today, human beings will view the whole of reality. They determine what will, and what will not, be intelligible or assimilable within a particular culture.

Fourth, worldviews include a praxis, a way-of-being-in-the-world. The implied eschatology of the fourth question ('what is the solution?') necessarily entails *action*. Conversely, the real shape of someone's worldview can often be seen in the sort of actions they perform, particularly if the actions are so instinctive or habitual as to be taken for granted. The choice of a life-aim—to make money, to raise a family, to pursue a vocation, to change society or the world in a particular way, to live in harmony with the created order, to develop one's own inner world, to be loyal to received traditions—reflects the worldview held; and so do the intentions and motivations with which the overall aim goes to work. Inconsistency of aim and action does not invalidate this, but merely shows that the issue is complicated, and that the answer to the third question ('what is wrong?') should certainly include human muddledness.

Worldviews are thus the basic stuff of human existence, the lens through which the world is seen, the blueprint for how one should live in it, and above all the sense of identity and place which enables human beings to be what they are. To ignore worldviews, either our own or those of the culture we are studying, would result in extraordinary shallowness.
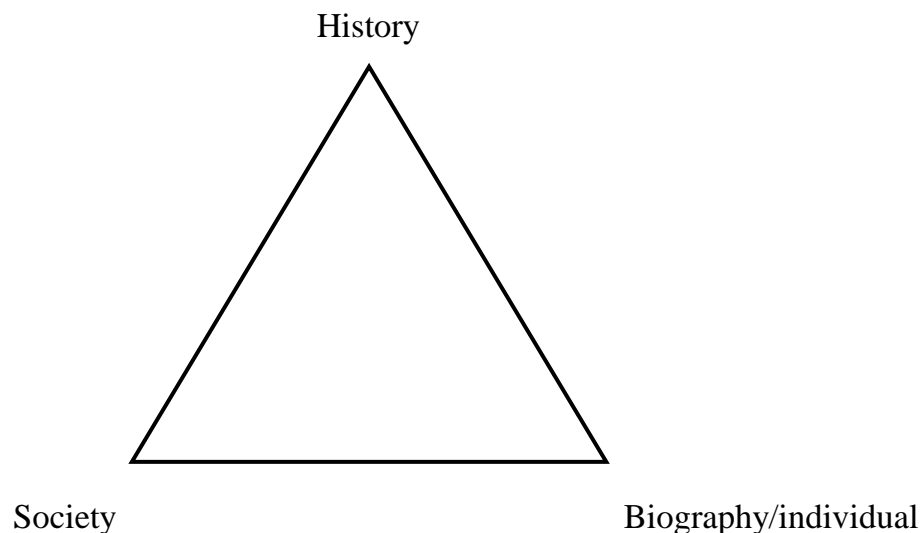
We may set out the interacting functions of worldviews as follows:

story

praxis ← → questions

symbol

As Wright continues, "worldviews are like the foundations of a house: vital but invisible. They are that *through* which, not *at* which, a society or an individual normally looks; they form the grid according to which humans organize reality, not bits of reality that offer themselves for organization. ... Worldviews normally come into sight ... in sets of beliefs and aims ..."

With Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) on the one hand and the emergence of the discipline of **sociology** on the other (via the likes of Montesquieu, Rousseau and the French Utopian Socialists, and on to Comte, with Adam Ferguson and David Hume, and on to Spencer, Marx and Weber), we have a decided "***turn to the human subject***". This turn itself created the emerging discipline of **hermeneutics** via notably Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), resulting with today, in the words of Roger Lundin, *The Culture of Interpretation* (Eerdmans, 1993).

Most helpful in this respect is the classic work of C Wright Mills [† 1962], *The Sociological Imagination* (OUP, 1959),[10] especially chs 1, 7 & 8. Here he details succinctly what has become pretty well common-place nowadays, and what may be expressed via a triangular diagram:
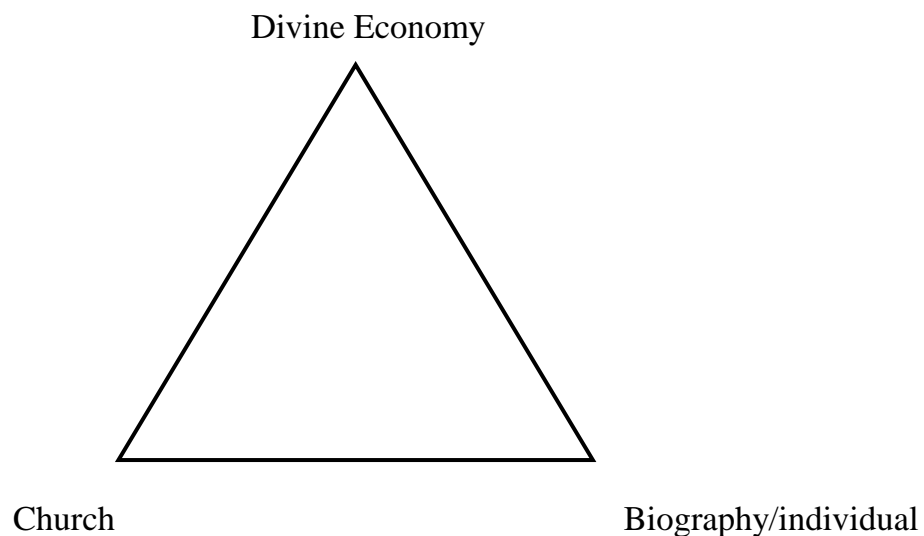
History

Society   Biography/individual

History, society, and the lives of individuals are necessarily all bound up together, to establish "human being". As humans 'naturally' and 'obviously' 'swim' in their cultures and societies,

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[10]   See especially *The Sociological Imagination*, pages 11-12, 14, 159, 175 & passim.

so they 'imbibe' what we also now term the "plausibility structures" of that culture. These are the **deemed** - and that word is vital - ways by means of which the members of that culture 'view' their 'reality'. This need not necessarily buy into the postmodern theory that all of 'reality' is "socially constructed" - although in some people's opinion this is claimed to be the case. A far better and more reasoned stance is that 'reality' is "socially mediated", rather than "constructed", *tout court*.[11] Another phrase that expresses the same notion is Paul Ricoeur's "available believable": what society deems to be available to be generally agreed upon as the belief system of their culture, granting members 'purchase' upon assumed 'reality'.

And here I'd invoke also another classic text from yesteryear, Michael Polanyi's *Science, Faith and Society* (Chicago, 1946/OUP, 1964). For Polanyi's work has consistently demonstrated the vital *faith element* in any epistemology, any communal exercise seeking any form of human knowledge and/or meaning. This is especially important for our appraisal of this documentary, since some of the interviewees invoke modern science to try to prove their moral point of view. It is not as simple as they try to suggest, I suggest, as we shall see!

Yet there is another triangle which we must also be aware of in the fulness of time:

Divine Economy

Church   Biography/individual

Our principle means of access into this second triangle, with its due "spirit of mind" (George Steiner),[12] is perhaps the Letter to the Ephesians - although that text itself also presupposes the entire Biblical corpus, the entire canon of Holy Scripture.[13] To prime us for this task, we turn to an elementary introduction to the craft of hermeneutics.

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[11] See notably A E McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: vol.1 nature, vol.2 reality, vol.3 theory* (T&T Clark/Eerdmans, 2001/2/3). There will be occasion to revisit this work later.

[12] George Steiner, a multilingual Jewish scholar, speaks of a "hermeneutic motion" after Dante's expression, "motions of spirit", in *After Babel: Aspects of language and translation* (Oxford, 3rd ed 1998), p.49 and passim.

[13] See e.g. Richard Bauckham, "Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story", in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, eds E F Davis & R B Hays (Eerdmans, 2003), pages 38-53. More generally, Craig Bartholomew, et al, eds, *Canon and Biblical Interpretation - Scripture and Hermeneutics Series* (Paternoster, 2006).

Part III
Approaching Hermeneutics

<u>Introduction</u>

Imagine yourself living at the height of the Middle Ages. Like ourselves today though, you would still experience the sun rise each day, trace its path across the heavens, and finally set over the Western horizon. Yet contrary to our present understanding of these events, you would view it all from the stance of the earth's being the stationary point - naturally, obviously, like any medieval person! We might also wish to construct complicated mechanical models adding the planets' motions to the sun's, a veritable Ptolemaic spiders-web of orbiting arcs and gyrations!

Enter now in your imagination the likes of Copernicus (1473-1543), Kepler (1571-1630) and Galileo (1564-1642), and we have what any baby observes if a mobile of the solar system is hung over their cot for their amusement. And by the time they are through primary school, it's all natural and obvious that the sun is at the centre and the earth spins round every day and orbits the sun annually. Curiously, we still refer to sun rises and sun sets, from an earthly point of view!

A 20th C Canadian Jesuit, Bernard Lonergan (1904-84), has formally constructed a four-fold process of how we humans establish such an appreciation of the world about us.[14] First there is the matter of *experience*, then hard on its heels *understanding*, with thirdly *judgment* (including *evaluation*), and fourthly *decision* (including *action*). The entire scheme continues but would take us too far for our purposes here and now. In other words, the change (the technical term for this change is "paradigm shift") from a medieval, Ptolemaic world view to that of Copernicus - to say nothing of Newton and now Einstein - is at best an entirely self-conscious affair, a deliberate communal process, whereby we go round and round, ever refining our understanding of our experiences by means of judgements and evaluations leading to actions that precipitate further experiences, etc. Or again, more formally still, this is one way of viewing what is called "the hermeneutical spiral", *hermeneutics* being our present topic.

1. Hermes was the messenger of the Greek gods. He it was who acted as a kind of go-between among mortals and the gods in the ancient world. Nowadays his name has bequeathed the art, the science, the craft of interpretation, of standing between two horizons or world views and 'reading' the one by means of the other. As far as theology is concerned, the one horizon is usually embodied in a text, Scriptural, creedal, a piece of ecclesiastical history or dogmatics, while the other is constituted by the reader's/readers' own position(s). Being as transparently self-conscious as possible about this task is the goal of hermeneutics.

The first step to such transparency is to be aware that all human experience comes pre-packaged, as it were. There is quite simply no such thing as raw or naked human experience. Everyone's experience as well as their approach to another's 'alien' experience, either that of far away in the past, in history, or contemporaneously, of another culture, incorporates some *preunderstanding*.

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[14]   See notably *Method in Theology* (DLT, 1973) and *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding. Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol.3*, ed. F E Crowe & R M Doran (University of Toronto Press, 1992).

Furthermore, this preunderstanding is itself conveyed by means of the language and symbols of the reader's own cultural experience-and-understanding (NB the hyphens). From the moment a child learns that embedded within what Wittgenstein called every day "forms of life" is a *language* component, which *interprets* this life activity, conveying its *meaning* (be it buying a loaf of bread or laying the family table for a meal or listening to a concert or making war - or love), our human experience is **necessarily marked by this linguistic element**. We cannot escape it. We may only learn to reflect upon it - to *evaluate* it! And *act upon* this evaluation. All our experience, as self conscious human subjects who participate in a wider communal human culture, comes in this language laden form. The hermeneutical task is to mirror to ourselves as best as we are able the processes that are at work in this complicated world of interpretation and human communication.

2. We used above the idea of "two horizons". This metaphor - and please note that it *is* a metaphor - is derived from the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who some have claimed "has published the most substantial treatise on hermeneutic theory that has come from Germany [in the 20th] century". His observation is that we all approach the task of reading, interpreting or using texts from a given situatedness in history and culture - a **given tradition** indeed - which he terms an "horizon". Just so, there are always *two horizons* to come to grips with when we engage in such a task: that of the world of the text read 'over there' and that of the reader's/readers' world 'here' 'within'. The trick therefore is to do two things at once: to learn to ***distance*** these two horizons, to see that they are indeed alien one to the other, there are innumerable differences and distinctions to be drawn; but also, if there is to be any meaningful reading of that other horizon, clearly they have to be bridged or, as Gadamer says, ***fused***. The twin tasks of distancing-and-fusing horizons is at the heart of hermeneutics.

3. We need to take the matter further by unpacking the details of George Steiner's "hermeneutic motion" (after Dante's expression the "motions of spirit", as we've seen above, but now elaborated in ch.5 of *After Babel*):

1. We come to the text in the first place *trusting* and *listening to **it***, on the basis that it does indeed have something to impart, conveying meaning to us; we therefore do our best to attempt to take it *on its own terms*, *discovering* what those terms might be;
2. We next raid the text, *"invading"* it with *our* agenda(s), appropriating it for *ourselves*;
3. But then we return, with our "captured sense", to *our own* horizon, naturalising/ indigenising the text in a kind of "home coming", turning it into *our own* language, our own native tongue and ground;
4. Finally, there is an act of *restitution* where the two (horizons) reach the/a new stage of equilibrium - where the "act of reparation" offers even something new that was already there.
   [In which case, this new 'classic' (not an oxymoron) is formed, being the outcome of the toing and froing 'dialectic' which distills yet another level of stability to human perception and appreciation - although clearly such definitive moments are rare in the history of human culture. Fascinatingly for us Christians, the English translation of the Scriptures in James I's day, which we know as "The Authorized

Version", distilled such an entity, crystalizing the hermeneutical encounter between Reformed yet Catholic England and the ancient Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. So marked was and has been the product of this translation upon English and even European history and culture.]

4. We need to broaden further our appreciation of hermeneutical matters by highlighting therefore the cultural dimension of hermeneutics, and how and why we need to treat it with care. This requires we return to our opening aphorism: the last creature to ask questions of the water is the fish. Just as the fish naturally, obviously swims in its native medium of water, so human beings naturally, obviously 'swim' in their respective cultural 'ponds' (recall the Introduction). This is what it means to be human, and we readily assume it for better - or worse - without further ado. Yet to ignore it, in the realm of hermeneutics, is fatal, for we become 'blind' to the medium by means of which we 'read' the world. Yet again we *also* have the capacity (should we desire it, should we develop it; yet Christian conversion presupposes it) to reflect to a degree upon this element of our human nature. Encountering other cultures (our second opening aphorism), either through time historically, or contemporaneously through, say, travel or migration, enhances this reflection - *demands* it even; Christian conversion most certainly demands it. The world-wide Church of the 21st C across sundry missiological boundaries certainly also demands it. Becoming alive to this cultural aspect, therefore, in a self conscious and self critical way, and cultivating this craft of deliberative 'reading' are all part of the goal of hermeneutics.

5. If all our human outlook(s) upon the world are mediated by our specific immersion in a particular tradition that grants us the very categories and symbols and institutions by means of which we learn to 'read' the world of human experience, how might we evaluate (that key word again) any kind of trans-traditional or cross-cultural encounters?[15] For, in the first place, the most 'obvious' temptation will be to 'read' that very encounter via those 'spectacles' perched upon one's *own* nose. Indeed; in the first place perhaps one can do no other! However, it very soon emerges that, as one attends more carefully to the encounter, learning even the language (both literal and metaphoric) of the other in that exchange, some features of that other's 'world' - notably those basic 'questions' (see again Tom Wright's fourfold assessment of worldviews) that all humanity seeks to address - might very well be more comprehensively handled by means of the one horizon *rather than* the other. (In most cases the 'traffic' will be of course in *both* directions, modifications to a degree emerging in both horizons.)

We can catch a glimpse of what this entails when we investigate how any given tradition itself changes its own mind about things. The classic example is the emergence of Einstein's theory of relativity. By the end of the 19th C Newtonian mechanics was found to work well enough in most situations - except when things 'speeded up', or when the focus was 'very small' or 'very large'. It soon became apparent however that these 'exceptions' - from a Newtonian point of view, that is - were actually better viewed, more comprehensively understood, as the norm and Newton's model (or more technically, paradigm) relegated to merely a subset *within* what emerged as the Einsteinian world of both General and Special Relativity. Newton's paradigm was not denied, note; merely now appreciated as *one case within a vaster number of cases*, all of which could be

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[15]   See especially McGrath, *op.cit.*, *vol.2 reality*, ch.8, "Natural Theology and the Trans-Traditional Rationality of the Christian Tradition."

more richly explained from a larger, more sophisticated framework, the paradigm of relativity and quantum mechanics.[Contrast here the *mutually exclusive* pair of paradigms with which we started, the Ptolemaic and the Copernican.]

Similarly, such cultural practices as murdering one of a pair of twins or female genital mutilation (note: the *pejorative* use of "murder" vs. "kill" and "mutilate" vs. "incise"), can be 'better' 'evaluated' via a Judeo-Christian western worldview than the respective original ones. Or can they be?! How *can* 'we' uphold "civil rights" over against, say, 'the Malaysian' denial that the philosophical premise behind such a view is 'richer' than that which seeks to maintain fundamental human 'inequalities'? And can in fact the now essentially *secular* Charter of the UN continue to maintain its own deemed 'superior' stance in the face of the current world's pluralistic views? For, in point of fact, given the history - the tradition! - of the emergence of human rights, this very notion owes its matrix to the Christian complex of concepts of God the Trinity on the one hand and the human image of God on the other. Take these away, and the 'idea' of 'human rights' has far less intelligibility - or becomes so distorted as to be unrecognizable. (See further below)

With these last examples, the study of hermeneutics now becomes the absolute trip-wire of the 21st C! Especially so from within our contemporary horizon of postmodern fragmentation or relativistic pluralism (as an *ideology* that tries to justify the array of pluralistic human diversity), for both are simply inadequate as sufficiently comprehensive views of human traditions from either a synchronic or diachronic perspective. These last remarks require some justification, given their ready assumption nowadays.

6. One often hears the statement: *Everything is relative, isn't it!* Like most generalisations, there's an initial and partial truth to the sentiment. For indeed many things in our world only function successfully when they are clearly placed within or viewed from an 'ecological system' that is intensely integrated and so relational. But this is not exactly what is usually being conveyed by the statement. Rather, it is being claimed that all stances and perspectives upon matters, especially ethical and/or religious and/or philosophical, are "relative". There is no *absolute* from which we may adjudicate among them: that is the claim.

Yet this "plausibility structure" is actually essentially flawed. And the reason is simple: the claim surreptitiously seeks *itself* to be an absolute - otherwise it could not try to make it - thereby in fact revealing a basic illogicality. Curiously, this is hardly ever noticed as many go about their conversations, their speaking and their listening ...

6.2 There is another cultural trait, "plausibility structure" or "available believable", which similarly seeks to influence "the furniture of [our contemporary] mind" (Donald MacKinnon) and which affects our ability to 'hear/view' certain key matters clearly. A popular depiction of the postmodern ethos, in which we supposedly live, sees the times as being one where it is impossible to believe any more in those Grand Stories which once gave overarching meaning to our lives. Views like Marxism or Evolutionary Progress - or even Christianity - are deemed "incredulous" (Jean-François Lyotard). Everything is viewed as being "dispersed in clouds of narrative elements" so that there is no "metanarrative" that may bring coherence to the whole - or so "the postmodern condition" would have us believe. However, once again such a claim is essentially flawed; and for the same reason as before re "pluralism". In trying to make the belief statement

that there are no metanarratives, it has to try to claim for itself that *it* is nothing less than metanarrational, overarching, all encompassing, absolute - which in terms of itself is again absurd.

6.3 For all that, the **consequences** of such views, so taken for granted by much of our contemporary world, are nonetheless *real*. "Plausibility structures" are powerful social features. For one, a ribald pluralism is seen as 'given'. Similarly, where there is no perceived overarching grand narrative, there remain - we are reduced to - only *a string of personal narratives*, or multiple ethnic ones, which are made merely to sit alongside each other, in an uneasy 'truce', with the so-called liberal democratic state arbitrating among the competing voices (**but** on what basis?!). A fragmentation of voices consequently is *de rigeur*, as many a postmodern analysis will seek to bear testimony to. And the social consequences are indeed often frighteningly real.

There are two further consequences that arise from this ready assumption of there being no supposed metanarrative, which impact even more directly upon our present proceedings - as if the previous ones might not, or be simply less consequential ...

7. The first, and of particular relevance for ourselves, is what Martin Buber once termed "the eclipse of God". While he was referring to the general loss of the sense of the transcendent in Western culture, his diagnosis has special relevance in our own day, since the cultural and philosophical assumptions that precipitated his own diagnosis have received a huge boost under the so-called "postmodern condition". Of additional importance is the reminting especially of such traditional notions as revelation. For if there is deemed to be no such transcendent deity who may be the source of such revelation, what passed previously for 'revelation' becomes either trapped immanently within this-worldly processes (as in AN Whitehead's "Process Theology" and all its later variants) or is 'reinterpreted' as being the *human **response and/or experience*** to some alleged 'revelation', now *viewed* in some vague mystical, mythical terms that resemble more the stance of the ancient Gnostics with their radical dualism than anything akin to the authentic Judeo-Christian tradition.

8. The second main consequence is even more deadly - if that were possible! Just as nature abhors a vacuum, so the social requires due authority. But whence any real and appropriate legitimacy when there is no clear metanarrative amidst the cloud of dispersed, little narratives that may command general consensus? In this context, many a contemporary analyst of the postmodern - such as Michel Foucault - justifiably avers quite readily to Nietzsche's expression "the will to power". For without due recourse to any 'true legitimation' - an oxymoron for postmodernists! - there is little else left than perceptions of power's ubiquity ... The social quite simply may not be left to fragment; humans cannot tolerate such conditions for long. Enter *Leviathan* (à la Thomas Hobbes) once more, yet on a much grander scale and with a far greater social reach and more caprice, not least given the present power of technology.

Part IV

All the foregoing in Parts II & III establishes, via an initial engagement with the tools of any Theology/Culture interface and hermeneutics, an ability now to come to the heart of the matter before us. Contemporary western cultures and their societies are the result of an extraordinary mixture of legacies. The upshot is a curiously alloyed set of traits, some reflecting deeper original

sources, with others displaying more recent derivatives. A core issue is any understanding of "human being". Given our contemporary post Christendom, post modern, post secular even, setting, with its dominant views of technology and even a form of scientism, we may set up two sociological ideal types (as it were).

The one views human being in explicitly contemporary terms, as a self-positing, autonomous, personal subject. The other, older view could not be more contrasting. Here human being embraces the twin features of creatureliness with brokenness. Humans are creatures of the Living God, in whose Image they have been made, thus granting us great dignity and significant capacities. And yet, so the Story goes, there is a fallenness to all this, resulting in a fundamentally marred and broken set of relationships.[16] Firstly, the canon of Scripture tells of a broken relationship with the Creator, which directly affects other relationships among humanity, with each other, within ourselves, and with the rest of the created order. To be sure; the Divine Image remains even so, so that humans reflect an essential goodness and beauty and truth. However, all is also fundamentally flawed. Nor should we miss the exact nature of these twin features: there's an asymmetry here, which the two qualifiers above indicate. The etymology of each spells it out: "essential" is derived from the Latin, *esse*, to be, while "fundamentally' is derived from the Latin *fundus*, deep. They are *not* synonyms therefore. Many a problem has developed down the centuries when either of these features has been misaligned with respect to this etymology - when for example in the 19th C and later a view of "sin" virtually disappeared in some/many theologies, or when in some fundamentalist circles the opposite has occurred and the Divine Image has become occluded. Nor have today's dilemmas regarding homosexuality been immune from any of these distortions.

The curious thing about the contemporary view of human being depicted above is that it simply could not have emerged (from around, say, the 17th C onwards) *apart from* the Judeo-Christian ethos and worldview, that massive cultural experiment we now call Christendom. At root, this establishes the essential "plausibility structure" that deems the Personal to be behind and within reality - or more specifically, the Triune Personal God, as declared and demonstrated in the Father's mission of the Messiah of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, and its aftermath in the mission of the Holy Spirit through the Church.[17] There is a profound yet only partial truth in the claim of Mahathir, ex Prime Minister of Malaysia, that "civil rights (and all that) are a social construct of the West". Some 'outsiders' naturally see 'us westerners' more clearly than we see ourselves! More vitally still, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, officially adopted 10th December 1948, has a curious history. While there was robust discussion and debate among the multinational drafting commission regarding various views on "ultimate reality", at its core, thanks primarily to Eleanor Roosevelt, the chair and driving force of the entire process, a generally theistic worldview prevailed. However, official acknowledgment of such a premise was eventually

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[16]   See e.g. William Cavanaugh & James K A Smith, eds, *Evolution and the Fall* (Eerdmans, 2017) for a contemporary assessment of this traditional doctrine.

[17]   See A Bryden Black, *The Lion, the Dove & the Lamb: An Exploration into the Nature of the Christian God as Trinity* (Wipf & Stock, 2015), and *God's Address—Living with the Triune God: A Scripture Workbook in the Style of Manuduction to Accompany* The Lion, the Dove & the Lamb (Wipf & Stock, 2017).

removed from the formal drafts; denial of any 'cultural bias' was deemed *de rigeur*![18]

The upshot of these important considerations is this. In effect, our contemporary view of human being is a distortion from the original, and may be called a "bastard step-child of the Christian heritage". Yet, those caught up within this present era, with its *vast changes* and shifts of cultural perception (a key and necessary feature of the documentary before us), frequently find such an examination of this most mixed and alloyed 'reality' about "human being" almost impossible - it's just "invisible" (Wright, as above). Just so, when it comes to members of the western churches, they are mostly caught up in an unintelligible quandary when confronted with the likes of our present debates on homosexuality that has thrown up such contradictory stances. It is an enormous challenge to peel back the layers of the hermeneutical onion, as it were - and often tears too are involved, given the deeply personal and intimate nature of the subject matter. Humans are sexual beings through and through. The two creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 make this abundantly clear, as does our collective human experience across time and space. What is also clear is that the sorts of stories that unfold only in that first book of the Christian Scriptures, involving sexual and reproductive matters, beginning with the curses of Gen 3, but also dramatically in the rest of the text, are furthermore not unique to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Sexuality has a generally problematic dynamic - full stop/period!

The upshot furthermore is crucially important. All these considerations begin to address the Two Basic Questions presented in Part II. Unless we are able to give a cogent explanation of this most curious situation these Questions pose, we have yet to get to the nub of what the Church is actually facing. That is my contention in this Response. And the Documentary, "Time for Love", does not seem to be even aware of such awkward problems. They foreclose the debate by siding merely with one side - and the wrong side in addition, I contend, as Catholic Christians.

Part V

And now for "the science". Properly, scientifically, "facts" do NOT speak for themselves. Rather, facts duly emerge from within and via theoretical frameworks, which are established over time and painstakingly through members of the scientific community. Polanyi's work furthermore, backed up by the likes of Karl Popper and many others, clearly avers to the faith-dimension of ANY form of scientific knowledge.[19] In addition, facts are NOT value neutral in the final analysis, even if the exact nature of the value element is more complicated to tease out often. For example,

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[18]   Details of this history are thanks to a personal conversation with Hilary Charlesworth, who is Professor at Melbourne Law School and Distinguished Professor at the Australian National University, Canberra.

[19]   See only Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society* again, and *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973); McGrath, *A Scientific Theology* again, which is crucial; T F Torrance, "The Church in the New Era of Scientific and Cosmological Change" in *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), pages 267-93, which is most helpful culturally and historically; and Steve Fuller, *Kuhn vs. Popper: The Struggle for the Soul of Science* (Icon Books/Allen & Unwin, 2006), which is an excellent write-up of a complex yet vitally necessary recent history of the sociology of knowledge.

the fruit of the poppy requires a form of technology applied to the seed; and this end product, the fruit or syrup or dried powder, may then itself be applied in at least two ways. The morphine may be used in hospitals and clinics to relieve pain, while on the streets, the drug dealer uses it to make money and the addict to get high - and eventually become poor and sick. Yet there's a deeper issue still to consider.

Deeply embedded within the western psyche is the perception that industrialization and the rapid advance of technology via science these past 200 years has brought about substantial "progress". Broadly speaking, this is true. No-one going to a modern dentist would disagree, I suspect! Certainly, I myself would not be alive today without the intervention of modern medicine, both at my very birth and during my forty-seventh year (although of course the former has only been reported to me, while the latter was a period of delightfully profound self-examination, for which I am truly grateful, given the 'sifting grid' of the Christian Faith). Yet astonishingly, "the war to end all wars", the Great War of 1914-1918, did nothing to actually diminish the international violence of the most violent century this planet has ever seen. Only perhaps in this 21st C is the western notional assumption of deemed 'inevitable progress with social change' being finally 'dented'. For the 'nice optimism of the 19th C' is giving rise to a curious *ambivalence* towards even 'science' nowadays, as we are being forcibly 'informed' nowadays through "climate change" and its deemed anthropogenic factors.[20] One serious alternative being proposed culturally and set before us references a Gaia-like cosmology, or theology even.[21] The film *Avatar* (2009) displays this magnificently well. And yet such a cosmology/theology heuristically fails to undergird the full enterprise of science itself, which may justifiably only arise within a culture premised upon the Judeo-Christian ethos and worldview.

Just so, it is most curious that we still see the present debates regarding homosexuality in the Church line up as one between "progressives" versus "conservatives", or "revisionists" versus "traditionalists". Sure; it's not hard to see why such labels might be used in the first place. Yet it is also the case that deep down such language is more revelatory of deep subconscious, Freudian issues perhaps than the truth of the situation, an elusive truth which is hard for westerners to properly comprehend. For the question remains: what warrants or principles of adjudication might we use when attempting to refine or refute *any* deemed interpretation of Christian reality, including the scientific?[22] A commonplace answer in many Christian circles (sometimes called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral) is to recite the four-fold mantra of "Scripture, tradition, reason and experience". This adds a fourth element, experience, to the more traditional "three legged stool"

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[20]   To be clear; I am no climate change sceptic! However, it is also true that the science of climate change is far more complex than any 13 second political grab of many a politician will permit! For this planet's climate has been changing since ... forever. And no amount of human hubris or ingenuity will basically change that. All that we may do is to ameliorate the additional, bad effects we humans have contributed to the overall situation these past 200 years. And that is no mean thing!

[21]   See again the section above of Wright's *NT and People of God*, notably pages 126-37, "On Theology" & "On Christian Theology".

[22]   See again McGrath, op.cit., *vol.3 Theory*, pages 193-236, and the discussion *inter alia* re the parallels between heresy and the refutation of theory.

or "threefold cord" within an established Anglicanism.[23] Yet to treat these as mere equivalents is to commit what is technically a category mistake, or more prosaically, not to compare apples with apples but rather pears with oranges.[24] To solve these concerns fully would embark us upon another entire agenda;[25] but we must at least signal a brief awareness of what is at stake.

With much abbreviation we may summarise this commonplace answer. "From the beginning" (1 Jn 1:1-3 & Jn 15:26-7) there was the apostolic witness to the Word-made-flesh and thereafter the canon of Scripture.[26] Related to canonicity but distinct from it were the Early Church's Rules of Faith and subsequent Ecumenical Creeds, as means of interpreting and even incarnating Scripture into the lives of the saints, so that tradition then emerges as that accumulation of Church exegesis or commentary upon Scripture.[27] It was only around the 13th century, for reasons that are still contested,[28] that Tradition began to emerge as itself an authority or source per se. This idea then

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[23]   By far the best most recent single summary of this alleged chief characteristic of Anglicanism is Richard Bauckham & Benjamin Drewery, eds, *Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine. Essays in Honour of RPC Hanson* (T&T Clark, 1998). Yet we should also note: "My suggestion will be that the idea [of the "Triple Cord"] is less helpful than it appears and that it proves impossible to argue that Hooker's view really illustrates it or that the Caroline divines after Hooker follow his views". So Rowan Greer, *Anglican Approaches to Scripture: From the Reformation to the Present* (Crossroad, 2006), p.14. Lastly, NB Paul Griffiths & Reinhard Hütter, eds, *Reason and The Reasons of Faith* (T&T Clark, 2005), being papers from the Princeton Center of Theological Inquiry colloquia between 2000 & 2003 - a brilliant and important collection.

[24]   Tom Wright makes the same point, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture* (HarperCollins, 2005), pages 100-102.

[25]   Not least, such an approach as Bruce Marshall's *Trinity and Truth* (CUP, 2000); and see McGrath, op.cit.*, vol.3 Theory*, pages 138ff, esp. 143-9 re "the strata of revelation".

[26]   Again, the literature is vast; see only John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch. Current Issues in Theology* (CUP, 2003).

[27]   See e.g. A C Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (HarperCollins, 1992), Ch.IV, "Pre-Modern Biblical Interpretation: The Hermeneutics of Tradition", pages 142-178; specifically, Paul Blowers, "The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith" in *Pro Ecclesia* VI/2 (1997), pages 199-228, who seeks to establish the Rule as the means of affirming Christian *identity*; and generally, Robert W Wall, "Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions: The 'Rule of Faith' in Theological Hermeneutics" in JB Green & M Turner, eds, *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies & Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans, 2000), pages 88-107, who proposes a "grammar of Christological monotheism" (p.101). See finally and notably William J Abraham, et al, eds, *Canonical Theism: A Proposal for Theology & the Church* (Eerdmans, 2008), and *Immersed in the Life of God: The Healing Resources of the Christian Faith*, eds Paul Gavrilyuk, et al (Eerdmans, 2008), a collection of "Essays in Honor of William J Abraham", both of which seek to bring us back to the fruits of the Early Church and all their due charisms under the Holy Spirit.

[28]   For a compressed overview, see again McGrath, op.cit, *vol.3 Theory*, pages 76-193, "the transmission of revelation". And see E L Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ: An Essay in Reorientation* (SPCK, 1984), pages 31-2, re the rise of Tradition as a separate entity. More comprehensively, see A E McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Blackwell, 2nd ed 2004), ch.4 , "Scripture: Translation, Text and Tradition", pages 119-147.

becomes consolidated in the 16th C with the Council of Trent's decrees on two streams of revelation (subsequently modified but not rejected by Vatican II centuries later - yet renewed, if more discriminatingly defined, by the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC: Montreal 1963, Bangalore 1978). All the while, the Protestant Reformation held to the tag of "Scripture alone", so that Scripture became to be seen clearly as the supreme and final arbiter. Next, historically, the Age of Reason decries the particularity of any historical divine revelation, finding due warrant only in either those necessary truths of (supposed) reason or what may be generally experienced and so known by humanity writ large. Consequently, the understanding(s) of 'reason' and the modes of reason, and so the various uses towards which the reasoning mind is put, need to be *carefully discerned and duly* **distinguished.**[29] Similarly, when reason becomes historicized, and so situated according to specific cultural horizons (contexts), 'tradition' itself is modified, becoming not just an accumulation of commentary but also tied to various social traits and practices, and so codes of life, which too ask to be carefully discerned and distinguished. Finally, contemporary western culture predominantly positions its centre of gravity in the *experiential*, in multifarious forms of *subjective* disposition - a radical form of contextualization - despite denials to the contrary when attempts are made to integrate these diverse 'sources' or 'authorities'.[30]

When all is said and done, within the terms set, our position in this Response views Scripture as *the* Source - and so as *the* Authority - with tradition, reason and experience, as so many resources, of varying degrees and kinds, all viewed within a clearly defined ecclesial setting, which becomes itself the very form of life in which Christian authority is encountered/is to be encountered, and therefore primarily exercised.[31] For thereafter we must seek to 'read' and 'perform' these Holy Scriptures, by means of the learned cultivation of a set of ordered practices, which enable, under the grace of the Holy Spirit whose economic role is precisely such a cultivation and recreation, the formation of the pilgrim People of God into that one holy catholic and apostolic Body which

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[29] Wright, *Last Word*, makes this vital point, pages 77-81, & ch.6, "The Challenge of the Enlightenment". There is *literally a* **world of difference** between say Richard Hooker's assessment and use of 'reason', and subsequent use from the Enlightenment onwards, so assumed as the norm by the West today. See esp. Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason: Reformed Theologian of the Church of England?* (Paternoster, 1997), which upsets many received views of Hooker from the 19th C onwards: hence the subtitle.

[30] See only *The Virginia Report*, 3.9, on "Reason", which seems devoid of the subtleties of an Alasdair MacIntyre or an Alister McGrath - let alone a Wittgenstein - collapsing reason *into* experience, and leaving no way to discriminate between contrary elements within tradition(s) or cultural experience(s). The Report's "furniture of the mind" (MacKinnon) "conforms" too much to "the world" and not enough to "the transforming power of the Gospel" (Rom 12:2) - even as it does struggle with legitimate questions, 3.5-11. For an extended assessment of the category of "experience", see D J Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Fortress, 1989), pages 272ff.

[31] Caveat lector! While content initially to frame the issue is this way, certain readers' pre- understandings of so-called Anglican triads and/or Wesleyan quads might obscure the true nature of our position. NB Cranmer's Preface to the 1549 and 1552 Books of Common Prayer where he seeks a "formative scripturalism" (Ephraim Radner), with the Offices as "showcases for scripture". Nor does this stance necessarily preclude any due *re-evaluation* of say such passages as Gen 1-3, for which see again e.g. *Evolution and the Fall*.

is their calling under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is, we may not properly separate the task of theology and its search for a due authority from ecclesiology; indeed, Reinhard Hütter would say that "Theology is [a] Church Practice" par excellence.[32] And with this we may agree.

Finally, some conclusions before we move onto our final part. The science of homosexuality remains a contested and moot matter. To be sure; while it may be initially agreed we might (just might; the qualifications will soon come below) acknowledge that the novel category of "same-sex attraction" has a certain basis in contemporary psychological views,[33] what thereafter we are to *make* of this 'condition' is another matter and certainly debatable. Significantly, while current science may proffer some hypotheses regarding efficient causes, teleology is mostly absent. Consequently, how the notion of "same-sex attraction" might impact upon that more basic concern of "human identity" is additionally debatable. To be sure again; on the basis of any secular morality and contemporary anthropology, "homoeroticism" among adult consenting practitioners would be deemed pretty well 'normal'. Our debate in the Church however offers a rather different paradigm and moral framework.[34] In fact, it is vital we distinguish our moral paradigm from that of 'the world', based not least on Romans 12:1-2, which very fulcrum passage echoes the NT Church's Catechism.[35] What is striking about contemporary (moral) views on homosexual behaviour is how *dualist* they are; echoes of ancient Gnosticism abound. They reveal a veritable *chasm* between physiology and/or biology versus psychology, and form versus function—all classically symptomatic of postmodern fragmentation. Yet human beings are profoundly *composite* psychosomatic spiritual beings. We simply may not properly hive off one feature of our nature from others, and say "All is well!" Such considerations are part and parcel of the robust views of the likes of Sherif Girgis, Ryan Anderson & Robert George, *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (Encounter Books, 2012).

This book, originally co-authored in 2010 as a Harvard journal article, carefully distinguishes a contemporary view of "contractual marriage" and Christian "conjugal marriage" where the necessary unitive feature of marriage is necessarily integrated with the procreative. In which light, one should not miss the delightful irony of Derek Tovey's "life affirming" ethic around 15:30 of

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[32]   R Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Eerdmans, 2000). For an excellent analysis and summary see Joseph Mangina, "After Dogma: Reinhard Hütter's Challenge to Contemporary Theology: A Review Essay", *IJST* 2/3 (2000), pages 330-346.

[33]   The scientific evidence of the aetiology of homosexuality is to date both multifactorial and indeterminate, with epigenetic features being as powerful as others, so that we may not exactly claim "a new understanding of gender and of sexuality". That conclusion is just too simple! For example, as a gay molecular biologist told me (in Australia): even if we might eventually isolate a 'gay gene', that does not mean its bearer will be/become gay. Furthermore, globally speaking, there are a number of forms of homosexuality. Samoa has their very own "fa'afafine", who are different from those who hang out in the Cross of Sydney (either in the 1970s or in the 2010s, both eras being themselves rather different), or San Francisco today, and finally, say, those of Central Africa, whom I have encountered.

[34]   By far and away the best one-stop-shop for any contemporary Christian moral theology would be Oliver O'Donovan, *Ethics as Theology: Vol.1 Self, World, and Time, Vol.2 Finding and Seeking, Vol.3 Entering into Rest* (Eerdmans, 2013/14/17).

[35]   See Black, *God's Address*, sessions 7 & 8, pages 43-55.

the documentary. For homosexual sex is *by definition* and *indicatively* sterile! True; heterosexual sex may be contraceptively practised but that is a *subjunctive* reality - it may be/have been otherwise.[36] [True again; I suspect that what Tovey has in mind also refers to negative views towards people who happen to be homosexual and which foster forms of violence towards them like assault or even murder. We would also include such state responses as chemical castration, as happened in the case of Alan Turing, who died in 1954, possibly from his own hand.] In other words, "contractual marriage", as practised by heterosexual or homosexual couples, it matters not which, has fast become the norm. It's just a contractual arrangement for as long as each party's needs are deemed to have been met. Like any contract, it may be terminated when the (perceived) terms of the contract cease to apply. And here the ethic may be justly described as a "liberal democratic" one.[37] Yet even here there's another irony we need to point out.

When the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill was published (it was passed in 2013), submissions were called for from the public. My submission pointed out a basic anomaly. The Bill's preamble states the governing principles of the Bill to be "equality" and "non-discrimination". However, it is clear the sections which followed only provided for the further 'marriage' between two men or two women. On what basis were there no *subsequent* sections for the provision of 'marriage' among, say, two women and a man, or two men and a woman, or among a number of men and women; that is, why are not polygamy, polyandry, and polyamory not being legislated for—*on the basis of equality and non-discrimination*? The crux is of course that *marriage* is far more than the business of consenting coupling. The nature of marriage—and NB the distinction between "nature" and "definition"—the reality of marriage simply may not be addressed *adequately* via such language as "equality" and "non-discrimination", however laudable those features may be. In fact, the entire contemporary exercise of "marriage equality" echoes the Soviet Union's deliberate policies surrounding language revision, when the entire point of *sliyaniye* or "fusion" was to elide all national or ethnic differences, and notably languages, via totalitarian central control. So much for "Democratic Centralism"! Why is the Christian Church now seeking to indulge in an equivalent exercise? Surely, a far more nuanced and carefully discerning approach would distance itself from such worldly forms of politics. By means of its own due traditions, we must create richer, more subtle forms of pastoral practice, premised on a deeper appreciation of its own specific theological heritage.[38]

Part VI

We have deliberately held over until last the matter of "justice". The "rule of God" (
û), which Jesus announced, declared, and demonstrated, and thereby duly established through

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[36]   This is even the case of a couple who marry when they are past their natural child-bearing ages. For it would have been the case that if they were both of an earlier age, they might very well have had children - all subjunctively ...

[37]   See the otherwise well argued case of William Stacey Johnson, *A Time to Embrace: Same-Gender Relationships in Religion, Law, and Politics* (Eerdmans, 2006), since his essential premise is merely assumed, never established; in fact, that omission has governed the approach of our entire Response here.

[38]   See especially the likes of Jana Marguerite Bennett, *Water Is Thicker Than Blood: An Augustinian Theology of Marriage and Singleness* (Oxford, 2008), and *Singleness and the Church: A New Theology of the Single Life* (OUP, 2017).

his mission from the Father, is the core of the *Missio Dei*.[39] And yet all this very language, like the word "Gospel" or ὑ itself, is patient of very different meanings depending upon the context or form of discourse being used. As with Paul's provocative use of ὑ in the opening section of his Letter to the Romans (1:1,9,15 & 16), given the fact that Rome too had its own Gospel, so "justice" is a most loaded term. It has certainly become a catch-cry in today's homosexual debates within the Church, seemingly defining one side and being denied of another. And yet, and yet ... One thing is absolutely certain: the root context or paradigm,[40] which defines the grammar of all language pertaining to that milieu, will actually determine the eventual meaning we should ascribe to "justice" also.

From the outset we need to invoke the work of Alasdair MacIntyre one more time (see note 8). With, first, his "disquieting suggestion" from the opening chapter of *After Virtue*, and then the subsequent titles of the next two books and their contents, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, it should be beyond dispute that things are not quite as they often seem. Certainly, this documentary, "Time for Love", seems oblivious to the issues from the way it is used by the interviewees, especially Rob Kilpatrick near the start (around 5 minutes in) - and this despite curiously his named qualifications. Yet again we need to point out we today are living in an era when the language or forms of discourse betray an extraordinarily alloyed legacy. On the one hand, there remain vestiges of the Christian ethos and worldview, while on the other hand there is clearly to the fore what I have termed "the bastard step-child" of that very heritage. ***These do not use language in the same ways*** - *even as the very terms employed are either similar or identical*. This is MacIntyre's thesis; and it is well nigh irrefutable once one gets stuck into studying the history he invokes, with its multifaceted aspects.

Today's form of justice in western societies (whether one subscribes to Rawls' version of it or not)[41] may be justly described as "liberal democratic", even allowing for a number of actual forms of political arrangement. In addition, it is - or should be! - incontestable that this form of life is a direct fruit of the Christian Gospel via the experiment of Christendom, even if the story is a mixed and bloody, long and ambivalent one. Yet as we supposedly attain some sort of "end of history", we need to enquire again as to the origins in particular of the Christian idea of justice, and even righteousness, its cognate. And on account of its being both a key feature of our current debates and a key component of the Biblical Story, we need to be fairly thorough!

A. Again and again in the OT, but especially in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, there's this refrain: "You shall be my people and I will be your God". It reflects in a nutshell the Covenant formula: for

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39   For this idea of *Missio Dei*, see Christopher J H Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (IVP, 2006); and most fulsomely, John G Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity*, Missio Dei, *Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Eerdmans, 2010), who examines especially the nuances of Barth's original German missional vocabulary, thereby establishing an important corrective to this oft used yet imprecise phrase, and so grounding it in the triune God, and thereafter seeing it reflected suitably in the entire Church.

40   In this very context of "justice", Andrew Kirk's classic text, *Loosing the Chains: Religion as opium and liberation* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1992) is seminal.

41   For an introduction to Rawls' theories of justice, see Paul Graham, *Rawls* (Oneworld Publications, 2007).

there is this profound covenant relationship between Yahweh on the one hand and the people of Israel on the other.

Ex 6:6-8   So tell the Israelites that I say to them, 'I am the LORD/Yahweh; I will rescue you and set you free from your slavery to the Egyptians. I will raise my mighty arm to bring terrible punishment upon them, and I will save you. [7]I will make you my own people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am Yahweh your God when I set you free from slavery in Egypt. [8]I will bring you to the land that I solemnly promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as your own possession. I am Yahweh.'

Jer 7:23   I gave them this command: 'Obey my voice; and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you.'

Jer 11:2-5   "Remind the people of Judah and Jerusalem about the terms of my covenant with them. [3] Say to them, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Cursed is anyone who does not obey the terms of my covenant! [4]For I said to your ancestors when I brought them out of the iron-smelting furnace of Egypt, "If you obey me and do whatever I command you, then you will be my people, and I will be your God." [5]I said this so I could keep my promise to your ancestors to give you a land flowing with milk and honey—the land you live in today.' "

Ezk 34:30-1 In this way, they will realise that I am their LORD God, and am with them. And that they, the community of Israel, are my people, says the Sovereign LORD. You are my flock, you are the flock I tend; I am your God - so runs the oracle of the Lord Yahweh.

B. These few examples show two key things:[42]

1.   God's ***Promise*** to the patriarchs - to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This takes the threefold form of land, descendants, and blessing; see Gen 12:1-3. The entire OT Story circles around these three: *will* there be descendants? *will* they live in the land - or *not*? will they be *blessed* there - or *not*? will they *be* a blessing? Or will the land "vomit them out" (Leviticus)? will a *remnant* then return - perhaps? A raft of such permutations drives the Story.

2.   Then there's the succinct beginning to the Ten Commandments: "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery; you shall have no

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[42]   See R E Clements, *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* (MMS, 1978), who makes these two categories seminal. Naturally, the discipline of Old Testament Theology has burgeoned: see only Gerhard F Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Eerdmans, 4th ed. 1991), who brilliantly sets the scene, with subsequent offerings by the likes of Rolf Knierim, Walter Brueggemann, Paul House, Bruce Waltke, Walter Moberly, and John Goldingay.

other gods besides me." Just as the Ten Commandments summarise the Law, so the ***Torah*** - to give it its proper Hebrew name: God's teaching or instructions for Life - so the Torah expresses, in its fulness, the *kind* of relationship the People of Israel are to have, with Yahweh on the one hand and among themselves on the other.

C. As well as these two key covenant expressions, of Promise and of Torah, the OT uses four major **words** to characterise the covenant relationship between God and Israel:

1. *Hesed*: variously translated "mercy" or "grace" (KJV), "steadfast love" (NRSV/ESV), "love" (NIV)
2. *^Emet*: variously translated "faithfulness" (NRSV/NIV/ESV), "truth" (KJV), "constancy" (JB)
3. *Mispat*: translated as "justice" or "judgment", enacted by a *shophet* or "judge"
4. *Sedaqah/sedeq*: translated "righteousness" or "righteous" = conformity to a two-way relationship, i.e. the covenant itself.

Typically, the first two describe God himself, while the second two Israel's authentic response, especially among Israelites themselves. Yet the second pair also describe God's actions towards Israel or individual Israelites, arising from the Covenant relationship. Again and again we see this in the Book of Psalms.

D. Yet there is a deep ambiguity, ambivalence even, to all this Covenant material. We see it starkly in Deuteronomy, and thereafter in the history somewhat edited from this Deuteronomic perspective (1 & 2 Kings). *On the one hand*, God's Covenant with Israel is purely his **election**:

> For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. (Deut 7:6-9)

Then on the other hand, just as Moses declares all Yahweh's sovereign will and testament for the covenant people of God to *dwell in the land* and be *blessed*, in his third and final farewell speech (Deut 29-30) he predicts the inevitable **failure** of the people due to their *faithless response*. So what do we make of this ***deep irony and paradox***:

• For how can it be that a people - who cannot keep covenant being such a "stiff-necked" (Deut 10:16) people, "who have eaten their fill and *forgotten*" (8:12ff) - should be given a land *on the express **condition*** that they do so keep covenant with Yahweh?
• where the possibilities of the ways of faith (in *remembering*, in obedience, in moral behaviour, etc.) contrast so explicitly with the dismal actualities of *self-trust*?
• where "blessings and curses" (chs 27&28) therefore represent not so much an either/or set

of *consequences* - "therefore choose life!" (Deut 30:19) - as an inevitable *sequence* of first blessing, *followed then by* curse, followed by ... the hope of restoration/recreation???!

This sequence works itself out painfully in the histories of first the house of Israel, who go into exile when Samaria is destroyed in 722 BC, and of then the house of Judah, with their exile to Babylon at the start of the 6th century, Jerusalem itself finally being destroyed in 587 BC.

And what of the hope of *full restoration ...*?

E. The answer is hinted at in Deut 30:6 (NB the chapter as a whole) and then found in Jeremiah 31:31-34, where God himself provides a *New Covenant*.

> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will become their God, and they shall become my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

There are a number of key features to this renewal of the Covenant relationship between Yahweh and his People:

1.   "The days are coming/the time is coming, when I will make." God is looking into a future time when something new will take place, something that he himself will do. It is entirely *God's sovereign initiative*, wrought upon the People of God by God himself - and no other. Furthermore, as we see in the parallel version of this New Covenant in Ezekiel, the *reasons* for God's actions are also entirely his own (36:22-3): "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations. I will sanctify my great name ..." [Just so the first petition of the Lord's Prayer!]

2.   Next, we can see that this renewing action of God has a twofold movement to it. With the characteristic covenant formula, "I will become their God, and they shall become my people", God makes himself responsible for *both* ends of this movement. God says he will make himself the agent *both* for God becoming theirs *and* for their becoming God's own. Yet how does this happen? The answer is clear: only with and through and in Christ Jesus. For with the Coming of Jesus, God enacts, he embodies, this twofold movement. For in Jesus, **God** acts *towards us* as the Incarnate God on the one hand, but on the other hand he *also* acts on behalf of humanity, as the substitute and representative **Human**, *towards God*. With the Coming of Jesus, *God fulfills **both** poles of the Covenant relationship*. He is Yahweh, the Father of Jesus, the One who calls and sends; **and** he is Jesus, Son of the

Father, the true Vine and Servant of Israel, who responds in faithful obedience in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ps 80, Isa 5:1-7, Jn 15:1-17, Mk 1:11/Isa 42:1, Isa 61:1-3/Lk 4:14-30).[43]

3. Yet there is furthermore a twofold character to these two movements. The grace of God in Christ Jesus has the twin elements of both judgment-and-mercy, mercy-and-judgment. God consigns all types of humanity to disobedience in order that he may have mercy on all types (so Rom 11:32, the climax of the entire argument, chs 1-11). And both this disobedience and this mercy find their twin focus on Jesus, the "one and the same" (Chalcedonian Decree) human being - as the Crucified Messiah and Lamb of God, who bears the curse of the Covenant on the Tree for us (Gal 3:10-13, Acts 5:30,10:39, 1 Cor 1-4); and as the Resurrected Son of God, who enables the blessings of the Covenant in the promised Gift of the Holy Spirit to come on those who believe (Gal 3:14, Rom 1:4). Just so, John 1:29-34 in a nutshell, and the other baptismal narratives (Mk 1:9-11, Matt 3:13-17, Lk 3:21-22, all of which echo Ps 2:7, Isa 42:1 & Gen 22:2).[44]

4. What the faithful Servant of Yahweh has accomplished on our behalf, becomes ours too in faith, as we are incorporated/baptized into his entire mission - into his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension - in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. And all this becomes ours as we are grafted into the Messiah (Rom 11:17ff), whose own Spirit writes God's *Torah* upon our hearts and minds (2 Cor 3:2-3), replacing our hearts of stone with lively hearts (Ezek 36:26ff) of love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness meekness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23), whereby we too cry "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6, Rom 8:15) & "Jesus is Lord!" (1 Cor 12:3). The renewed Covenant in both Jesus the Lord (Phil 2:6-11) and the Holy Spirit involves the intimate knowing of God as our Father, and ultimately our knowing as we are known (Gal 4:9, 1 Cor 13:12).[45]

F. What then of the relationship between Israel and the Church? For both are clearly called the People of God. Two extremes need to be avoided.

Firstly, we have the idea that the Church has superceded Israel, that God has moved on from Israel to the Church. Though it might be tempting to see this as the NT picture (and there are some suggestions that this might be the case: e.g. the conclusion to the parable in Matt 21:41-44), overall the NT is more complex and subtle than this, as we may see from the likes of 1 Peter 2 and Rom 9-11.

Then secondly, another reading of Scripture that is too simple sees too much according to a literal

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[43]   This twofold movement is the core of my chapter 8, "Deconstruction", in *The Lion, the Dove, & the Lamb*, which is heavily indebted to the work of T F Torrance. See also importantly, in the context of this simultaneity, Robert W Jenson, *Systematic Theology, vol.1 The Triune God* (OUP, 1997), Chapter Five, "The Persons of God's Identity", 75–89, where he begins the kinds of theological moves that will establish Trinitarian speech—of Jesus *the* Israelite Servant who represents *both* the community of Israel before Yahweh, serving Israel and Yahweh, *and* Yahweh to Israel.

[44]   See my *God's Address*, notably sessions 3 & 9.

[45]   See notably Q.14, in *The Lion, the Dove, & the Lamb*, p.85 and passim.

rendering of the promises to Israel; this is especially the case regarding some OT passages. For we have also already seen how Paul deals with the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant in Gal 3-4. The three key things from Gen 12:1-3 become fascinatingly reconfigured, so that *the* descendant (rather than descendants, plural) becomes Jesus himself (v.16), and the blessing becomes elided with the promised Holy Spirit (v.14), which together constitute *the* inheritance, all received by means of faith (v.18) - all given by the sheer grace of God.[46]

The key to getting the balance between these two extremes right is to be found in the person of Jesus, Yahweh's faithful Servant and Messianic Son of God, in whom and in whom alone all the promises of God are fulfilled (2 Cor 1:18-20). For it is **from him** that *both* Jew and Gentile alike derive their true identity as the People of God; there is now no essential distinction between these two groupings (Gal 3:28, Eph 2:11-22). Indeed, we can go further and say that God's calling of *Israel/the Jews* in the first place was ever and only for the blessing of the *whole* (that's the literary logic of Genesis). But all of this does not then mean God has given up on the Jewish nation - "by no means!" The very point of Rom 9-11 is to speak of God's Covenant faithfulness *as* the very basis of *anyone's **hope***: this is the logic of the transition from Rom 8:17-end and on into chs 9-11. That is to say, there remains something yet to come for the ethnic people of Israel; but *what* exactly that is, and *how* that is, and *when* that will be—all this I suspect will *surprise* us in the event, despite our very best speculations! For so it was when Jesus himself came the first time ...! In case you did not notice ...

G. All in all, the upshot is the People of God are to embody a very particular *culture*, with ***justice*** being a *specific trait*, *governed* by the fulfilment of the covenant, and so duly expressing the kinds of relationships among all the parties.

A-G designate therefore the root paradigm, the basic cultural context, from which we may derive the notion of Christian justice/righteousness, that supreme righteousness/justice the faithful God has declared and demonstrated through the Divine Economy of Salvation via the very likes of Rom 1:16-3:26 or 1 Cor 1-4 or Ephesians, and which thereafter is to be embodied and so reflected among God's People in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Just so, notably, Rom 6:17 (in context) and its reference to the NT Catechetical form of teaching.[47] And so thereafter, what specifically constitutes just and loving behaviour among Christians. For the NT Catechism, with its foundations in the fulness of Christian baptism, *determines our very Christian **identity***. The alternative, proposed by this documentary, constitutes what can only be called a "tragic irony". As with any classic Greek tragedy, the protagonists of the drama surely have many a noble quality, often even heightened, and yet the very 'fates'—key, necessary ingredients of reality—will ensure foreclosure, the impossibility of 'comedia'. And so the "irony" is revealed: those who looked for completion precisely here, in this form of human relationship, found inevitably fundamental frustration. The difficulty is as I suggest, after the likes of Alasdair MacIntyre: we western Christians confuse the alloyed nature of the language that surrounds us, when in fact we should

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[46]   See notably *God's Address*, session 9, on Galatians 3:1-4:7.
[47]   Ibid., session 7. It is here especially I contend that we may address Tim Meadowcroft's desire around 43:30 onwards for a living form of Biblical authority in people's lives. And with that to address powerfully the sorts of justice and mercy for outsiders other interviewees correctly call for following Jesus' practice.

be most careful to discern the true purity of Bible-speech, the Magna Carta of our own polity, the fruit of divine revelation. Just so finally, 2 Cor 10-13 in their fulness are most apt for our day, given the signs of the times wherein we live.

Bryden Black
Christchurch
Eastertide, 2018[48]

The Third Sunday after Easter

THE COLLECT

Almighty God, which showest to all men that be in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; Grant unto all them that be admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may eschew those things that be contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as be agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ.

HISTORY

This Collect is from the Sacramentary of Leo I and is one of the oldest in the Prayer Book. The petition reflects the fact that Easter is a principal time for baptism, thus the reference to "all them that be admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion" (Lat. *qui Christiana professione censentor* — who are enrolled as Christians by profession).

The Fourth Sunday after Easter

THE COLLECT

Almighty God, which dost make the minds of all faithful men to be of one will; grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing, which thou commandest, and desire, that which thou dost promise; that among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Christ our Lord.

HISTORY

This Collect from the Sacramentary of Gelasius is a prayer for Church unity. The revisers of 1662 changed the invocation thus: "O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affection of sinful men," reflecting the preceding years of civil strife and the Commonwealth's suppression of the Church of England, its episcopacy, and its Prayer Book.

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[48]   These two Collects are from *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer: Compiled and Presented for Devotional Use*, by C Frederick Barbee & Paul F M Zahl (Eerdmans, 1999), pages 56-59.