

CHRISTOLOGY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

In Romans 3:1 the Apostle Paul asks the following question: “What advantage is there in being a Jew?” In the passage preceding this verse, Paul has just noted that the outward symbols of Judaism, like circumcision, by themselves fail to give the Jews any advantage. All the same, Paul does attribute to the Jews a significant advantage. For having noted that outward symbols, like circumcision, make little difference to a life of genuine faith, Paul is quick to add that being a Jew does have this advantage, namely, that “to them [i.e., the Jews] were committed the words of God” (Romans 3:2).

In this essay I want to consider a similar question to the one raised by Paul, but this time apply it to the Christian instead of the Jew, and then particularize it to the issue of human development. Specifically, I want to consider the following question: “What advantage is there in being a Christian for our growth and development as human beings?” Human life is never static but dynamic. We do not stay the way we are. How then does Christian faith benefit human development? My answer parallels Paul’s answer. On the one hand, many of the externals of Christianity provide no advantage whatsoever to the Christian when it comes to human development. On the other, and this mirrors Romans 3:2, there is a great advantage in being a Christian for human development inasmuch as to the Christian is committed the Word of God—the Word of God being in this case Jesus Christ.

In offering this answer, I therefore take Christology as the key to unpacking human development. My thesis is that human development finds its completion in Christ and cannot be properly understood apart from Christ. The advantage of being a Christian for human development will thus consist in both an epistemic advantage for properly understanding human development and a substantive advantage whereby Christ constitutes the *telos* of human development.

Having indicated the general line I am going to follow in connecting Christian faith with human development, I need to be quick about adding some disclaimers. Certainly I do not mean to suggest that the Christian automatically experiences a burst in development simply by adopting the accouterments of the Christian religion. Even to say that the Christian has an advantage in human development because in Christ God has given himself to the Christian is inadequate. I cannot in good conscience endorse an elitism in which being or becoming a Christian

automatically confers entrance to a stage in human development that is barred to the person who is not self-consciously Christian. Christians regularly exhibit folly and immaturity; non-Christians often exhibit wisdom and maturity.

Thus I am ready to affirm that someone like Victor Frankl—who to my knowledge never made a profession of Christian faith—and yet who has made peace with his experience in Nazi concentration camps, who has forgiven his captors, and who has even found meaning for his own life in the horrific experiences he encountered at the camps has advanced morally and spiritually beyond a certain Jewish-Christian convert I knew some years back. She too had experienced the same Nazi horrors as Frankl, having been assigned to the death camps as a young woman. But forty years after the fact she still hated her Nazi captors, liked to imagine herself taking a machine gun and blowing them away (her words exactly), and admitted to multiple stomach surgeries because of the bitterness she bears her tormentors.¹

Thus I shall not treat Christianity as a magic bullet that, as it were, *ex opere operato* propels human development, much less brings human development to full actualization. That I am going to refrain from this sort of elitism, however, should be clear from the title this essay, for my concern is not in the end with Christianity and human development, but with *Christology* and human development. There is a significant difference. Christianity can indicate nothing more than a doctrinal or institutional system. As such it can be devoid of any genuine vitality, growth, or developmental potential. And even when Christianity denotes a genuine faith lived out in community, the expression of that faith may still be deficient.

Christology, however, is another matter. If we take seriously the word-flesh Christology of Chalcedon² and view Christ as the *telos* towards which God is drawing the whole of humanity,³ then any view of human development that leaves Christ out of the picture must be viewed as fundamentally deficient. To take this position, however, is not to engage in an elitism or naive triumphalism about the Christian faith because the developmental potential that being a Christian confers is not finally located in our own highly imperfect expressions of the Christian faith, but in Jesus Christ who alone embodies the true expression of Christian faith.

Being a Christian is an advantage for human development, therefore, only in the derivative sense that Jesus Christ through his life, death, and resurrection has transformed the nature of human existence, and offers humanity the grace to participate in this new, transformed human existence.⁴ Christ as the *telos* for all of creation by implication becomes the *telos* of human development. Henceforth human development is properly conceived only in reference to the transformation of human existence in Christ.⁵ All the same, whether, and the degree to which, someone who self-consciously styles him or herself as a Christian grasps the reality of this new, transformed human existence is hardly a foregone conclusion. There is nothing to bar someone like a Victor Frankl or an Andrei Sakharov, neither of whom ever styled themselves as Christians, from having grasped the reality of this transformed existence, though in the self-understanding of their own development they never consciously referred to Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 8:11 Jesus remarks that many shall come from the east and west and sit down to sup with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Although this passage is typically read in terms of Christ opening the door of salvation for the gentiles, it is also

possible to read this passage as Christ opening the door of salvation to some who are not consciously part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Karl Rahner's notion of "anonymous Christians" and Simone Weil's notion of people seeking the true God by seeking their highest good—even when they may be explicitly rebelling against religious structures that consciously refer to Christ—come to mind here.⁶

It is not my purpose to endorse any particular exegesis of Matthew 8:11, nor is it my purpose to endorse Rahner's and Weil's views on what constitutes a Christian. My purpose rather is simply to point out that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions by which we can examine a human life, and then judge whether the developmental potential that is inherent in the new life in Christ is on the basis of certain arbitrary criteria we have selected barred from one individual or guaranteed to another. The Spirit of God blows where he wills (cf. John 3:8). It is not for us to adjudicate where and how God's grace may act, especially in the matter of human development.

Christ as the Lens

To offer these disclaimers, however, is not to minimize the importance of Christology for human development. My contention remains that Christology is the key to human development. Yet in making this claim, let me be clear in just what sense I am using Christology. Christology, on the one hand, can be nothing more than a doctrine about the person and nature of Christ. Even at this Christology is indispensable to the Christian for assessing any account of human development since all the Christologies within the Christian tradition (even the heretical Christologies like those of Arius and Nestorius⁷) find the purpose for which our humanity was created by God encapsulated in the humanity of Christ. Christ's humanity is the antitype to which all our particular expressions of humanity look for their perfect expression.

On the other hand, as important as Christology is for human development on account of its dogmatic significance, the importance of Christology for human development is still greater. As Karl Barth has consistently argued, Christology is not merely one of many Christian doctrines, but the very lens through which alone it is possible properly to understand the panorama of human existence. Thus in writing his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth employed Christology as the lens through which to understand one major aspect of that panorama—no less than the whole of Christian theology. No doctrine was unaffected by this move. For instance, the doctrine of election, which in the reformed tradition that Barth belonged to had been understood in terms an absolute divine decree that was utterly detached from human history (i.e., the *decretum absolutum* of Calvin and the Reformers), was now to be understood concretely in terms of God's rejection of Christ at the cross together with God's election of Christ in the resurrection.⁸

Following Barth's example, I shall use Christology as the lens through which to understand, not the whole of Christian theology as Barth did in his *Church Dogmatics*, but one aspect of the human sciences, namely human development. To be sure, this will strike naturalistic scientists, committed as they are to naturalistic categories and methodologies, as completely wrong-headed. Nevertheless, the human sciences, in trying to render an account of the human person, speak to a

subject that theology also addresses, to wit, anthropology broadly construed. In using Christology as the lens through which to understand human development, I understand that I am placing theological considerations in a privileged position vis-a-vis human development. But the Christian theologian is fully warranted making this move since the Christian theologian necessarily regards Christ as the antitype to which all humanity looks for its perfect expression, human development being a case in point.

It needs to be stressed, however, that this privileging of Christology as the lens through which to view the human sciences is by no means condemned to violate the integrity of the human sciences. In cross-disciplinary studies, and especially when science and theology intersect, violence to the integrity of respective disciplines is always a legitimate concern, for there is always the possibility that one will lose its integrity at the expense of the other.⁹ The word-flesh model of Christology, however, is marvelously adept at avoiding this violation of disciplinary integrity. The reason for this is quite simple. The word-flesh Christology avoids the gnosticism that inevitably finds a deficiency in Christ's humanity. Because Christ is both fully divine and fully human, Christ can never be less than human. Thus whatever reliable information the human sciences have to offer needs to be taken seriously, and indeed will be taken seriously when construed through the Christological lens. In particular, there is no reason to worry that the work of developmental psychologists will be vitiated by being interpreted through the Christological lens. Since Christ is fully human, the human sciences can speak with integrity and authority even to Christ's humanity.

Still, if the work of developmental psychologists is not vitiated by being interpreted through the Christological lens, insofar as developmental psychologists omit Christ as the *telos* of human development (and human nature generally), their work must from the vantage of Christology be regarded as incomplete. Consider, for instance, the way Erik Erikson characterizes the notion of *integrity* which forms one pole of his final stage of psychosocial development, i.e., *ego integrity vs. despair*.¹⁰ Erikson is quite right in observing that the years 65 and beyond become a time for making sense of one's life, assessing its worth, and especially coming to terms with the inevitable gap between one's aspirations and actual accomplishments. A conflict is being played out here, with the winners in the conflict coming to the conclusion that life, despite its ups and downs, was well lived and worth being lived, and with the losers in the conflict coming to the conclusion that life has passed them by, that the things they needed to do to make life worth living were never done, and that now there is no time for them ever to get done. To characterize the winners in terms of integrity and the losers in terms of despair seems therefore particularly apt. And indeed, Erikson did not win his numerous literary prizes for naught.

But when one probes further and asks, for instance, what integrity actually means for Erikson, one finds that his understanding of integrity is conditioned by secular presuppositions and values that are inimical to a Christological understanding of integrity. If you will, Erikson sets up his own lens consisting of secular presuppositions and values, and uses it to understand integrity in a way inconsistent with a Christological understanding of integrity. For consider Erikson's account of integrity:

Although aware of the relativity of all the various life styles which have given meaning to

human striving, the possessor of integrity is ready to defend the dignity of his own life style against all physical and economic threats. For he knows that an individual life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of history; and that for him all human integrity stands or falls with the one style of integrity of which he partakes. The style of integrity developed by his culture or civilizations thus becomes the “patrimony of his soul,” the seal of his moral paternity of himself. . . . In such final consolidation, death loses its sting.¹¹

What Erikson does with integrity here provides an object lesson for how the Christological lens retains the valid scientific insights of developmental psychology, while at the same time probing the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical presuppositions that invariably get imported from outside the discipline of developmental psychology (and indeed, from outside of science) to interpret the valid insights of developmental psychology. The need to sort out the scientific core from the philosophical/theological framework that inevitably gets superimposed on the scientific core is always necessary in such situations. This is not to say that there is a hard and fast distinction here—the precise boundaries between science on the one hand and philosophy/theology on the other hand are fuzzy at best.¹² But the question of philosophical and theological presuppositions, and how they affect our interpretations of the science we are doing, should always be in the back of our minds.

Thus in the Erikson example we need to ask, Whence the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical presuppositions that Erikson imports to interpret the valid insights he has made in advancing his stages of psychosocial development? Erikson is correct to observe a developmental conflict occurring in the final years of human life, and equally correct to characterize this conflict in terms of an opposition between two polarities that phenomenologically have qualities of integrity and despair. In general phenomenological terms he rightly characterizes integrity in terms of the satisfaction that comes from having successfully negotiated one’s way through the vicissitudes of life, and despair in terms of the disappointment of not having made the most of one’s life. But having described an insight of genuine consequence for developmental psychology, Erikson introduces his own secular presuppositions and uses them to make sense of integrity in a way that is impossible to reconcile with a Christological understanding of integrity.

Erikson refers to “the relativity of all the various life styles which have given meaning to human striving.” To be sure, our historical circumstances condition how we are able to find meaning in our lives. There are unavoidable historico-cultural antecedents that constrain the form of meaning our lives may assume. Yet from the vantage of Christology, our individual quests for meaning, even across the wildly diverse circumstances of life, are still united in Christ. Christ remains the *telos* that subsumes humanity’s striving after meaning. There is a certain degree of relativity in our striving for meaning conditioned by circumstance, but from the vantage of Christology a pure relativism of the sort Erikson seems to be suggesting (or at least leaving open) is impossible, for Christ ever remains the unifying principle for human development.

Or consider Erikson’s comment that our life styles “give meaning” to human striving.¹³ Implicit here is a constructivism which is foreign to a Christological understanding of meaning. From the vantage of Christology our life styles only give us meaning in the derivative sense that God in Christ has already given us meaning. It is not for us to construct meaning in our lives, but for us to discover the meaning that God has given our lives in Christ. As the Psalmist writes, “As

for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more” (Ps. 103:15-16). Any meaning that we construct is like that flower to which the Psalmist is referring. It is beautiful in its time, but then it vanishes away. Only when the meaning of our lives is located in Christ can we finish the Psalmist’s thought, and say, “But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting . . .” (Ps. 103:17).

Or consider again whether it makes sense from the vantage of Christology to assert “an individual life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of history”? As we have seen, Christology does not deny historical contingency—indeed, it has no way of denying historical contingency since Christ was a historical figure. All the same, Christology is incompatible with any historicism that views a human life as historical without remainder. Yes, an individual invariably finds him or herself in a historical context not of his or her choosing. But to characterize an individual’s life as an “accidental coincidence” is saying too much, for it misses entirely that God’s purpose for each individual is that he or she be united to God in Christ—and this is a trans-historical truth.

It is for this reason that Erikson’s echo of first Corinthians 15 about death losing its sting rings hollow. Death loses its sting not because the accidental coincidence of one’s life happens to have turned out all right, enabling one to construct meaning of one’s life, but because God has loved us in Christ, and through Christ has broken the power of sin and death over us. Without a Christological base from which to understand integrity, Erikson turns to his own metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical presuppositions to understand integrity. In each case he comes up with a valid insight about integrity (e.g., that it is historically-culturally located), and yet in each case his insight does not go far enough. Yes, for the individual with integrity death has lost its sting; but the sting of death is finally lost not because we through our own striving have manufactured a “patrimony for our souls,” but because Christ loved us and died for us.

Christ as the Completion

The preceding Christological recension of Erikson’s notion of integrity epitomizes a common pattern whenever Christology is employed as a lens through which to assess the findings of developmental psychology. In each case the scientific core is preserved because Christ qua his humanity automatically falls within the domain of the human sciences, of which developmental psychology is a special branch. Christ in virtue of his humanity is fully subject to the findings of developmental psychology. On the other hand, the philosophical/theological presuppositions that as a result of their own faith commitments developmental psychologists bring to bear on their scientific findings are subject to revision and reinterpretation in the light of the Christological lens.

Now if the Christological lens were applied no further than as a principle for interpreting the findings of developmental psychology, its significance would still be considerable. Indeed, as theologians have come increasingly to recognize in recent decades, any prolegomenon to theological inquiry requires an explicit statement of what hermeneutic principles are going to be

employed, with the Christological lens typically serving as the hermeneutic principle *par excellence*.¹⁴ Hermeneutic principles, however, can be viewed as mere interpretive overlays, without entering substantively into the theories they are being used to interpret. This, however, is not the case with the Christological lens. Christology also enters as a substantive theoretical entity into developmental psychology.

What I mean by this last claim is that Christ does not serve merely as an interpretive device, but enters substantively into the theoretical framework of developmental psychology. Christ is the lens through which we are to understand human development. This much is clear to anyone who takes Christology seriously, i.e., who takes Christ as the antitype for humanity. But Christ is also the incarnate Word who through the incarnation has redefined what it is for a human being to be a human being. We should therefore expect Christology to enter substantively into our understanding of human development as well.

Typically when a lens is used to examine a picture, the lens is independent of the picture. Thus when I look at a scene with a pair of binoculars, the scene itself need not contain any binoculars. Nevertheless, when Christ is used as the lens through which to examine human development, since Christ is the new Adam who redefines humanity (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:45), we should expect the Christological lens, as it surveys the field of human development, to focus on Christ as well. Indeed, if the transformation Christ brings to the human condition is as radical as the Scriptural witness asserts it is (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17 and John 3:5-7), as the Christological lens surveys the field of human development, we should expect Christ to be the principal object on which the lens gets focused.

But is this not to conflate science and religion? If Christ can be made to enter substantively into a theory of human development, must not a theory of human development into which Christ has entered substantively be severely compromised in its status as a scientific theory? The answer is no. To see why the answer is indeed no, and that there need never be any worry about smuggling Christ into a scientific theory through the back door so that the theory loses its integrity, we need to understand clearly how it is that Christ can enter substantively into a theory of human development without violating the integrity of the theory in question.

The key point to understand in this regard is that Christ is never an *addendum* to a theory of human development, but always a *completion*. An addendum to a theory of development would look something like this: Erikson has his eight stages of psychosocial development,¹⁵ but now with Christ on the scene we have a new stage, say, the *Jesus vs. Satan* stage. The absurdity of such a move is clear, as well as its clear violation of the integrity of Erikson's developmental scheme.

A completion, however, is something wholly different from an addendum. To see how completions work, it will help to consider the following example from mathematics. In principle, the applied mathematician can do everything he or she needs by working with rational numbers (i.e., all the numbers that can be represented by finite or repeating decimal expansions). Rational numbers are the only numbers the applied mathematician ever encounters when working with a calculator or computer. In principle, therefore, the applied mathematician can make do entirely with rational numbers. Nevertheless, it turns out that the mathematician's task becomes a lot

easier when he or she embeds the rational numbers into the real numbers, and uses the real numbers in deriving formulas and equations. The real numbers are known as the completion of the rational numbers.¹⁶

The real numbers include both the rational numbers and the irrational numbers (numbers like π and the square root of 2, written $\sqrt{2}$). Thus in going to the real numbers, the applied mathematician loses nothing that he or she had before in the rational numbers. Nevertheless, the real numbers do not represent an artificial addendum to the rational numbers. The rational numbers, even though adequate for all the actual calculations that the applied mathematician ever needs to make, are *conceptually inadequate*. A circle whose radius is given by a rational number q has circumference given by the irrational number $2\pi q$. A square whose side has length given by a rational number s has diagonal given by the irrational number $\sqrt{2}s$.¹⁷ The applied mathematician will in practice always end up approximating $2\pi q$ and $\sqrt{2}s$ with rational numbers, but the fact remains that in assigning rational approximations to the circumference of a circle and the diagonal of a square, the applied mathematician cannot escape that these inevitably are approximations whose validity as approximations depends on the real numbers that complete the rational numbers.

This last point in our mathematical analogy is particularly relevant to the role of Christology in human development. A developmental psychologist can investigate human development without reference to Christ much as the applied mathematician can make his or her calculations without reference to the real numbers. But the validity of the insights of the developmental psychologist can never be divorced from the fact that human development is ultimately encompassed in the one who by transforming the nature of human existence has become the *telos* of human existence in general and of human development in particular, namely, Christ. So too, the validity of the approximations that the applied mathematician makes can never be divorced from the real numbers that undergird and complete the rational numbers to which the applied mathematician is limited in his or her calculations.

It needs to be stressed that even though the real numbers can be gotten from the rational numbers by adding the irrational numbers, the real numbers are not properly conceived as an addendum to the rational numbers. Mathematicians think of the real numbers as the completion of the rational numbers and explicitly call the real numbers “the completion of the rational numbers.” The real numbers do not merely include the rational numbers. Rather, any real number that is not a rational number (i.e., every irrational number) is arbitrarily close to a rational number. One can think of it this way: If one takes a microscope, then at any given finite level of magnification there is always a rational number that is indistinguishable from a given irrational number. Thus from a purely finite perspective it doesn’t appear that there is anything else besides the rational numbers. And yet without the real numbers undergirding the applied mathematician’s calculations, the conceptual soundness of those calculations cannot be maintained, for circumferences of circles and diagonals of squares do not make sense solely in terms of rational numbers.

So too Christology tells us that the conceptual soundness of any theory of human development cannot be maintained without the completion that Christ brings to such a theory. The pragmatics of the theory can, to be sure, be pursued without recourse to Christ. But the

conceptual soundness of the theory can in the end only be located in Christ, for it is Christ who defines humanity in general, and psychological growth in particular. For this reason Christ is indispensable to any theory of human development. Christ as the completion of a theory of human development maintains the theory's conceptual soundness, even as the real numbers maintain the conceptual soundness of the applied mathematician's calculations.

In calculating the circumference of a circle the applied mathematician is in the first place concerned with the circumference of the circle, and not with the rational approximation of it. The rational approximation comes after the fact, being the best that applied mathematicians can do given the limitations that constrain human intellects and computational devices. So too, the developmental psychologist, in trying to understand some aspect of human development, is in the first place concerned with the reality of that aspect of human development as it is embodied in Christ (even if the developmental psychologist never explicitly acknowledges Christ), and only secondarily with obtaining a pragmatic understanding (cf. the applied mathematician's calculations) of that aspect of human development, a pragmatic understanding which will inevitably hinge on whatever theoretical constructs (cf. the rational numbers) the developmental psychologists are capable of formulating given the limitations of their intellects. Christ has assumed the fullness of our humanity, and in so doing renders the study of human development the study of himself.

Conclusion

Hitherto I have focused on Christ entering into human development in virtue of his humanity. In closing I want to consider how Christ enters human development in virtue of his divinity. In the Christology of Chalcedon, Christ after all is not a human subject whose divinity is then superadded (this was the standard heresy of adoptionism). Christ consists neither of a strictly human subject nor of a strictly divine subject. Rather, Christ is a single subject who is simultaneously human and divine. As the formula of Chalcedon states, Christ's human and divine natures are united in a single subject (hypostasis) whose two natures are neither confused nor changed nor divided nor separated.¹⁸

What practical significance does Christ's divinity have for human development? The lesson I want to draw from Christ's divinity for human development is that no developmental scheme is ever final. What I mean by this is that for all the valuable insights a developmental scheme may give us, it can never properly be employed as a way of pigeonholing someone or limiting someone's developmental potential. To say that someone has or has not attained to a certain stage of development, be it cognitive à la Piaget or social à la Erikson or moral à la Kohlberg or even spiritual à la Fowler,¹⁹ can be terribly useful. But it must never be made determinative of what Christ in virtue of his divine power is capable of effecting in us. Christ is the liberator of humanity. As such not even the best laid developmental scheme can be determinative of human developmental potential. Christ's grace works in human lives, and that grace is capable of exploding any developmental scheme.

Consider the case of Timmy. Back in 1974 a teenager named Timmy entered Bruce Ritter's Covenant House in New York City, a home for abused and runaway children.²⁰ When Timmy first came to Ritter, Timmy was a 16 year-old, five-foot-ten-inch, 110-pound speed freak who had left home at age 13 and been a drug addict ever since. Timmy would swallow or shoot up anything he could find to achieve a high. Once when he couldn't find any drugs, he and a friend injected oven cleaner into their veins.

When Bruce Ritter took him to one of the major New York medical centers that specialized in drug abuse, after two weeks of testing, the verdict on Timmy was this: seven doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers stated that in all their experience they had never encountered any boy who had so heavily abused so many different kinds of drugs; they gave Timmy zero chances to make it. A developmental psychologist looking at Timmy might have seen someone who had failed properly to resolve his Oedipus complex, who was currently experiencing severe role confusion, and whose cognitive development was being stunted, if not permanently impaired, by Timmy's persistent use of drugs. Drastic intervention in the form of enforced institutionalization for an extended period would seem to be Timmy's only hope, and even then his life would be an empty shell.

Bruce Ritter tried to surround Timmy with a "human cocoon," as Ritter put it, always keeping someone around him so that he couldn't escape and shoot up. But Timmy always managed to escape. Timmy also attempted to commit suicide. Bruce Ritter, however, would not give up. Gradually Timmy went without drugs for three days. Then for a week. Then Ritter managed to convince some friends to take Timmy for the summer at a camp in the Adirondacks. Timmy didn't touch drugs that summer and put on thirty pounds. Next Ritter managed to get one of the best high schools in New York to take a flier on Timmy and enroll him as a senior. Timmy graduated with honors. Timmy was also reunited with his parents. The story ends with Timmy going on to college, and last being a college sophomore getting A's and B's.

Please don't misunderstand. A developmental psychologist—indeed any sane person—looking at Timmy when he first appeared at Ritter's doorstep would certainly have been justified giving Timmy a very poor prognosis. Even Bruce Ritter, for all his efforts to rescue Timmy, recognizes this. Ritter is not naive about the power of addiction to destroy human lives. As he puts it, "Most of my kids don't make it. For every Tim there are a dozen or twenty Johns, Marks, Marys, Bills, Cindys, who never come in out of the darkness, who can't tear free from their vices. . . ." But Ritter is also quick to add, "Tim has taught me a lot about God, too. I've told Timmy a hundred times that God is the reason he made it back, because God loved him that much and wouldn't let him go."

And that's really the point. When we look at people, it must always be with the realization that God loves us and won't let us go. According to second Corinthians 5:14 Christ died for all. This was certainly the death of a human being, but it was the death not merely of a human being. Christ as God in the flesh destroyed the power of sin and death at the cross. Anything that seeks to imprison us, even a failure properly to negotiate a stage in human development, is therefore never the final word. Christ is always the final word. As the transcendent God who cannot be imprisoned in any humanly-contrived structures—who breaks the bonds of hell and tramples the

powers of death—and at the same time shares his life with us, so too we cannot be imprisoned in any humanly-contrived structures.

Timmy may be a developmental psychologist's nightmare, but all nightmares are ones that Christ has entered through his cross, and into which Christ brings his redemptive purposes. Because Christ can never be factored out of the developmental equation, human development is never a closed system. Paul writes, "The creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). Human developmental potential finds its fulfillment in this glorious liberty.

Endnotes

¹For Victor Frankl's reflections on his Nazi experience, see Frankl's (1985) book *Man's Search for Meaning*. His passage on love on p. 57 could easily be mistaken for the writings of a Christian martyr. Throughout the book one is constantly confronted with the tremendous adaptability and developmental potential of the human being in what amount to impossible situations. As for the Jewish-Christian convert, needless to say, I keep her anonymous. She was a regular on a Messianic Jewish television program some years back. I heard her in person express her ongoing bitterness against the Germans, Poles, and especially the Nazis at a Messianic Jewish congregation in Chicago in 1987.

²Cf. Loder and Neidhardt (1992, ch. 5). The definition of Chalcedon starts, "Following the Holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man. . . ." Quoted from Loder and Neidhardt (1992, p. 81).

³Not to mention the whole of creation: "In him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible. . . . All things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together. . . . In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:15-20).

⁴Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

⁵Loder (1989) makes this point effectively. Loder's fourfold ways of knowing—the world, the self, the void, the holy—require an infinite reference point like Christ. The impoverishment of secularism and existentialism, which limit themselves to only the first two and the first three of these ways respectively, and the concomitant impoverishment of their view of human development flows directly out of their repudiation of such a reference point. See Loder (1989, ch. 3).

⁶See for instance Diogenes Allen's chapter on Weil in Allen (1983). Allen's reference to Weil as "an outsider" is entirely relevant to our discussion. Deciding who is in and who is outside the kingdom of God does not seem to be a domain of human competence (cf. the parable of the weeds among the wheat, Matthew 13:24-30).

⁷See Pelikan (1971, pp. 195-200 and 251-256 resp.).

⁸Barth (1957, p. 3) in *CD II/2* writes, "The doctrine of election is the sum of the Gospel because of all words that can be said or heard it is the best: that God elects man; that God is for man too the One who loves in freedom. It is grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ because

He is both the electing God and elected man in One. It is part of the doctrine of God because originally God's election of man is a predestination not merely of man but of Himself." Thus the doctrine of election, which for Barth is "the sum of the Gospel," is not just grounded in Christ, but Christ is the very object of election.

⁹Cf. Kuyper's doctrine of the various spheres and departments of life in Kuyper (1994).

¹⁰Erikson (1963, pp. 268-269).

¹¹Erikson (1963, p. 268).

¹²See for instance Laudan (1983).

¹³Cf. Josiah Royce's notion that the self is an achievement and not a datum—see Boas (1957, p. 553).

¹⁴See Thiselton (1992).

¹⁵Cf. Erikson (1963, ch. 7).

¹⁶See Rudin (1976, p. 8 ff.).

¹⁷The story goes that when a student of Pythagoras demonstrated that not all numbers are rational by showing that the diagonal of a square is "incommensurable" with its sides, he was killed by his fellow Pythagoreans. As Morris Kline (1972, p. 32) describes it: "The discovery of incommensurable ratios is attributed to Hippasus of Metapontum (5th cent. B.C.). The Pythagoreans were supposed to have been at sea at the time and to have thrown Hippasus overboard for having produced an element in the universe which denied the Pythagorean doctrine that all phenomena in the universe can be reduced to whole numbers or their ratios." This desire for neat self-contained explanations is typical of contemporary secular culture. Christ always destroys of our neat categories.

¹⁸*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "Chalcedon, The Definition of."

¹⁹For a joint treatment of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg see Mischel (1971). A good summary of Fowler's stages of faith can be found in Fowler, Nipkow, and Schweitzer (1992, ch. 1).

²⁰For the following account of Timmy refer to Ritter (1988, pp. 18-23).

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