

*Tampering with the Gospel: Georgian*

*The Holy Human Empire: Van Til*

*The Controversialist: Coray*

*Editorial and Letters*

*Proposed New Translation of the Bible*

*The Spirit and Salvation*

VOLUME 37, NUMBER 9

OCTOBER 1968

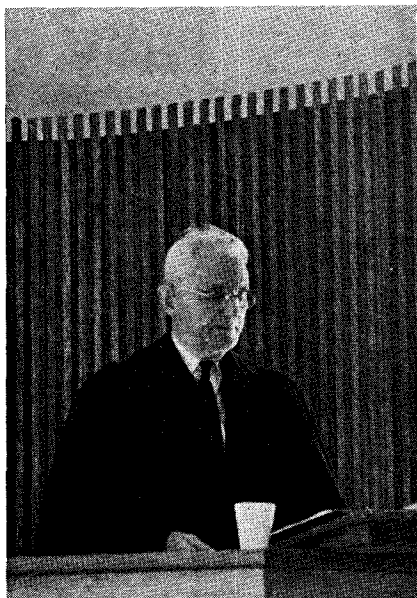
**F**irst of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered for all men; for sovereigns and all in high office, that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in full observance of religion and high standards of morality.

**S**uch prayer is right, and approved by God our Saviour, whose will it is that all men should find salvation and come to know the truth. For there is one God, and also one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus, himself man, who sacrificed himself to win freedom for all mankind, so providing, at the fitting time, proof of the divine purpose.

*(1 Timothy 2:1-6, NEB)*

# The Holy Human Empire

CORNELIUS VAN TIL



*The substance of this address to the entering students was given at the opening exercises of Westminster Seminary. It gets to the heart of the issue between the two diverse messages heard in the church today.*

\* \* \*

“Thousands of cubic feet of air were required to vibrate the vocal chords of all who spoke from the rostrum and floor at Uppsala,” said Dr. J. Robert Nelson, a *Christian Century* editor-at-large, as he reported on the meetings of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in that Swedish city in July.<sup>1</sup>

The delegates spoke of Jesus and the resurrection. When the Assembly received the report on missions “the delegates demanded that a phrase such as ‘for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved’ (Acts 4:12) be put at the masthead of the statement.” (So wrote Cecil Northcott, also a *Century* editor-at-large.)<sup>2</sup>

These words lead us back in thought

to the period right after Pentecost when Peter and John were called before the “rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest” to give an account of the “evil” they had done in preaching “through Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:1, 2).

What a marvelous change for the better, you say. In Jerusalem the rulers in the church “denied the Holy One and the Just and desired a murderer to be granted” them (Acts 3:14); here, in Uppsala, some 2,000 Christians from more than 80 countries were “summoned to respond to the motto ‘Behold! I make all things new’”<sup>3</sup> and thus to confess the name of Jesus apparently in the way that Peter and John did.

Instead of repressing those who would preach Christ and the resurrection the great body of church leaders at Uppsala urged all the church to go forth to preach “the Resurrection Humanity of Jesus.”<sup>4</sup> Uppsala merely sought for new methods and new words to bring the message that Peter and John brought but, says Cecil Northcott, the message is still the same.<sup>5</sup>

## A Second Look

A second look at the “message” adopted soon forces the conclusion upon you that Uppsala did *not* proclaim Christ and the resurrection. On the contrary, the Assembly of Uppsala, as well as that Council of Jerusalem, virtually forbade the preaching of Jesus and the resurrection in the way that Peter and John preached it.

To be sure, Uppsala did not, in so many words, forbid men to preach Christ and the resurrection. On the contrary, as noted, as far as *words* are concerned, Uppsala would seem to have joined Peter and John in their proclamation of the name of Jesus as the only name given under heaven

by which men must be saved. But the *meanings* of the words have changed. Uppsala does not mean by the name of Jesus what Peter and John meant by that name. Nor does Uppsala mean by the word “resurrection” what Peter and John meant by that word.

Uppsala means by the name “Jesus” what modern theology means by that name and Uppsala means by the word “resurrection” what modern theology means by that word. “The Message” of Uppsala echoes the message of modern theology and the message of modern theology is the message that man has within himself the power to lift himself by his own bootstraps toward the realization of his own ideals.

Modern theology does have a ‘God’, to be sure, but not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the creator of heaven and of earth. The ‘God’ of modern theology is made in the image of man; modern science and modern philosophy have persuaded modern theologians that, upon pain of exclusion from the circle of intelligent men, they dare not believe in the God in whom Peter and John believed.

Modern theology also has a ‘Christ’ but its Christ, as well as its God is made in the image of man. It is from modern science and philosophy that modern theology has taken its picture of man and then has “blown up” this picture of man and called it Jesus. This Jesus is then called the Son of God, but then all men are called sons of God; all men are said to be potentially sons of God. The picture of Jesus must for some inexplicable reason inspire men to act out the inherent divinity that is within them.

## Modern Theology

Modern theology believes in Jesus as the Son of God who rose from the dead, but then, it also believes that all men have risen and are rising from the dead everywhere and all the time.

According to modern theology the message of the church to the world is *not* that men are creatures made in the image of God, that they are sinners because of their breaking of the law of the love of God and that as such the wrath of God abides upon them unless they repent and believe that Jesus, the only Son of God and Son of man, died for them on the cross of Calvary for their sin and rose again on the third day for their justification.

According to modern theology the message of the church to the world must be that there is some sort of God who somehow loves all men no matter what they have done or possibly may do in the way of breaking all the "laws" of God or man. This God does the best he can to give men rain and sunshine and fruitful seasons. But without the help of the church this God cannot expect to be too successful in his well-meant effort at relieving men from the burdens of war and poverty.

In strict agreement with modern theology's view of God and of Christ, Uppsala sends forth its message to the world. There is in this message no reference to the gospel of salvation by grace such as was proclaimed by Peter and Paul, by Augustine, Luther or Calvin, Wesley or Whitefield. There are, to be sure, a few words in the section on missions that might be interpreted that way if the context did not forbid it. But the message as a whole consists in saying that since as men we are neighbors of one another, we should learn to live together in peace in order then together to root out poverty, racism, and armaments; and as churches to promote union.

### The Message of Uppsala

Says Cecil Northcott: "Uppsala, then, has given us some new marching orders—a seven-year mandate to go on—until the next Assembly, with the eternal mission of converting the whole life of man to the service of Christ as the Master of Humanity."<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps you think I have been unfair in my report on Uppsala. There was some time ago, you say, some such theology and some such program of church activity as you describe. In 1900 the great theologian, Adolph von Harnack, described the essence of Christianity as consisting of the universal fatherhood of God and the uni-

versal brotherhood of man. But what of the theology of the Word? Surely the neo-orthodox theologians, and among them especially Karl Barth, reject with vehemence any such humanistic misinterpretation of the gospel as was propounded by the old modernists.

Well, here it is: the message of Uppsala. You may read it for yourself. Von Harnack might well have written it. The message is built around the idea of a "new humanity," a humanity in which all men love each other as God loves all men. It is the idea of universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man all over again, *mit ein bischen andern Worten*.

But perhaps you still object and say that Uppsala was not primarily a theological conference. It was a gathering called together largely for the purpose of constructing a program of action. We must therefore not look for a theological pronouncement in the message of Uppsala.

### The Princeton Conference

Well, then, note what took place at the Gallahue Conference on Theology held this summer at Princeton, New Jersey. At this conference the theologians gathered did seek to hammer out a doctrine of God, of man, and of Christ that should be both Biblical and relevant to our time. Surely at this conference, held at Princeton, a center of neo-orthodoxy, we may expect to hear a message like to the message of Peter and Paul. But a brief look at some of the addresses given at the Gallahue Conference will convince you that its theology is in accord with the Uppsala program and the Uppsala program is in accord with the Gallahue Conference at Princeton.

Speaking negatively, not one of the speakers at the conference showed any desire to present anything like the gospel as it was taught in Princeton

Seminary by such men as Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield and Geerhardus Vos, as these men followed the example of Peter and Paul.

For the speakers at the Gallahue Conference, the God of Peter and Paul, the God of Luther and Calvin, is dead. This God has now been dead so long that he scarcely comes to mind. If he comes to mind at all it is when you think back to the early days of mankind's evolutionary development when our ancestors thought metaphysically and when the disciples of Jesus expressed the gospel in the language of myth.

We all know now that we cannot intelligently think of a God who is transcendent above the world and who works out a plan that he had from eternity for the world in the history of the world. If we are to use the word *God* at all we must use it to represent the principle of unity and love in the world that in some unknown fashion brings order out of chaos in the world.

The initial address at the Gallahue Conference was given by Bishop J. A. T. Robinson, who wrote *Honest to God* a few years ago. "How do we remain theologians after 'the death of God'? How do we remain Christians after 'the death of the church.' These, I believe, are the two questions that will underline most of the discussion of the days and years immediately ahead of us."<sup>7</sup>

### Bishop Robinson

With these words Bishop Robinson set the tone of the conference. What if God is dead? Didn't Sir Julian Huxley say that "those aspects of nature and those experiences which are usually described as divine" will always remain? Said Huxley: "A humanist evolution-centered religion too needs divinity, but divinity without God. It must strip the divine of the theistic qualities which man has anth-

1. *The Christian Century*, August 21, 1968, p. 103f.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 1040.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 1032.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 1044.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 1044.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 1044.

7. *Theology Today*, July, 1968.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

ropomorphically projected into it, search for its habitations in every aspect of existence, elicit it, and establish fruitful contact with its manifestations. Divinity is the chief raw material out of which gods have been fashioned."<sup>8</sup>

Agreeing with and restating these words of Huxley's, Bishop Robinson adds: "In other words, that dimension of reality which caused men to create gods remains valid. But the theistic mold has been shattered. The shaping of the stuff of that experience into gods existing as beings, or into a God existing as a Being, in another realm above or beyond this one, is no longer credible."<sup>9</sup>

### Humanism within Mystery

Here we are in this world. We are surrounded by ultimate mystery. Let us agree with James Hemming when he says that "each may wish to put something different into that mystery. One group may put a personal God there; the other a question mark; but each will agree that the ground of man's being is humanism within mystery."<sup>10</sup> Or again, let us agree with the French Marxist, Roger Garandy, who says that what makes him an atheist is the fact that he can know nothing transcendent and because the most beautiful and exalted name that he can give to what people speak of as ultimate, is *man*.

Such statements, says Bishop Robinson, "point to a new and exciting situation." Theists and atheists will soon be brothers. Feuerbach and Teilhard de Chardin will be friends." God-language and man-language will be seen to be aspects of the one great language-event of the future.

In Position Paper 205, Daniel Callahan, Executive Editor of the Catholic weekly *Commonweal*,<sup>12</sup> assured the theologians at the conference on purely non-biblical grounds that "man needs and can have hope that the cosmos (of which he is a part) has a potential direction and goal; his ultimate self-identity requires the capacity to envision his own future as coherent with that of a meaningful universe."<sup>13</sup>

The theology of the Princeton Conference may therefore, so far as we are able to trace it, be taken as a proper theological foundation for the purely humanist program of action promulgated at the Conference at Uppsala.

### Your Preparation

It is in such a situation as this that you have come to this Seminary to prepare yourselves for Christian preaching or teaching the only name given under heaven by which men must be saved. The world about you is writhing in sin and pollution; it loves darkness rather than light. The natural man holds under in unrighteousness the light and truth of God his creator that shines in and around him. And now the church, by and large, is placing the light of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ under a bushel.

But thanks be unto God who always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.

There are still seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. With them we would place the gospel of Christ and the resurrection once more on a candlestick. We would help you to prepare yourselves to join with Peter and Paul, with Luther and Calvin, to proclaim Jesus Christ, who died for sinners on the cross and rose for their justification, to a lost and dying generation.

Come and humble yourselves with us before the face of Almighty God and then, in the power of the Holy Spirit, ask the rulers of the church again: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

May the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ grant you his grace to learn to witness with all boldness and humility to him through whose death and resurrection men must be saved.

---

### TAMPERING

(continued from page 98)  
church." Now this view is an improvement on the old liberal position that saw almost nothing historically worthwhile in the Bible. Nevertheless, who decides what parts of the Bible are mythical and what parts are historical? Are we going to decide only after we have polled the experts and then accept the majority opinion? No, the Christian believer who accepts the Bible as the Word of God is ready to listen to God's word as the Bible bears witness to itself.

*LIFE* confidently asserted that in

the Bible "God seems to develop from one kind of deity to another . . ." But this kind of statement cannot be supported when you take into account the overall message of the Bible. Whether you read in Genesis, or in the Psalms, or in the Gospels, God is both a just God whose wrath comes on the wicked and a merciful God to those who come to him in penitence. He is both of holier eyes than to behold iniquity and the gracious One who assures his children that he removes their sins from them as far as the east is from the west. Let us be alert against oversimplifications about God!

Again, *LIFE* said that the Genesis account of creation appeared a thousand years after the Babylonian epic of creation and was simply a reworking and purification of an old myth. This means, of course, that Moses cannot have been the author of the Book of Genesis. And why is it desirable to remove Moses as author of the Pentateuch? For this reason: if these documents came from a time long after Moses, they cannot be relied upon to present genuine history.

But there is one difficulty with this approach. In the Gospels Jesus Christ asserted: "Moses spoke of me." Whom shall we believe? Christ or the critics? Did this man Moses write about Christ or not? My friends, I do not know how you answer, but as for me, I would rather listen to the voice of the Son of God than to the supposed insights of contemporary scholars. Jesus Christ cannot be dissected. You cannot look up to his example, you cannot look to him as the Redeemer, and you cannot listen to his teachings, if at the same time you play a game of sorting out his teachings — accepting what strikes you as valuable while rejecting the rest.

This can boomerang: you might meet someone who accepts your rejected passages and rejects what you accept. And if you put enough such people together, how much of a Bible will you have left? Recall Thomas Jefferson's "scissors-and-paste" Bible and multiply Jefferson many times over.

No, we must take our position with Jesus Christ for whom all the words of Moses and the prophets were the Word of God. And when he places his sanction on Holy Writ by saying, "The Scripture cannot be broken," who are we proud but poor mortals to say that it can be broken?