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# Douglas John Hall's Contextual Theology of the Cross

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In order to appreciate Douglas John Hall's distinct perspective on the theology of the cross (*theologia crucis*), it is necessary also to consider the context which Hall seeks to address. Hall's treatment of the theology of the cross cannot be understood purely in its own terms because an essential element of his overall approach to theology is that Christian theology is by definition contextual. Rather than functioning as a repository of immutable truths (*theologia eterna*), Christian theology is always engaged with its cultural milieu, and such engagement is indeed a basic dimension of the theological endeavour.

The attempt to comprehend one's culture—to grasp at some depth its aspirations, its priorities, its anxieties; to discern the dominant ideational motifs of its history; to distinguish its real from its rhetorical mores—all this belongs to the theological task as such.<sup>1</sup>

This contextual approach is in keeping with many trends in contemporary theology—what Martin Marty and Dean Peerman have termed the “new particularisms”—which adhere to the premise that a theologian's particular context needs to serve as a major point of departure for his or her task.<sup>2</sup> In his writings, Hall very clearly indicates that North American culture and North American Christianity function as his contextual starting point. Moreover, it is significant for us that Hall often particularly addresses the specific context of Canada. There is a polarity between Hall's treatment of the theme of the theology of the cross and his engagement with his cultural and religious context. If we wish to fully appreciate Hall's theological project, these two poles are to be distinguished but they cannot finally be separated.

Hall clearly seeks to maintain continuity with the Christian tradition. He writes:

All Christian theology involves reflection upon the past, notably upon those “core events” which constitute the rudimentary data of constructive theology. It would not be *Christian* theology apart from this reflection upon its own formative past.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed Hall enjoins Christians to study seriously “the tradition of Jerusalem” in order to counter what he terms “religious simplism”.<sup>4</sup> However, Hall insists that the data of the Christian tradition cannot simply be reiterated in established formulae bequeathed to us by previous generations. Hall repeatedly cites the following words from Luther:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not *confessing* Christ, however boldly I may be *professing* him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is tested, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.<sup>5</sup>

For Hall, Luther’s distinction between confession and profession necessitates a theology that is contextual. Only by paying heed to the present context—the “little point” currently at peril—can Christians proclaim a confession of Christ instead of mere profession, *evangelion* (Gospel) instead of mere *didache* (teaching), *theologia* instead of mere *doctrina*.<sup>6</sup>

I may know all the creeds, catechisms, formulae, systems, doctrines, dogmas, soteriological principles and scriptures of the tradition and be able impressively to cite and recite them; but if I am ignorant of or detached from the concrete realities of my world—realities containing new questions to which the wisdom of the past cannot speak directly—then all my professional aptitude will be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.<sup>7</sup>

The burden of Hall’s writings is to claim that for the contemporary North American context, the appropriate confession of the Gospel is the theology of the cross. This claim derives from a) his understanding of the North American context and b) his understanding of the nature of the theology of the cross.

## The North American Context

While other contextual theologies make use of a praxis of liberation (eg. Latin American, black, feminist theologies), Hall has chosen the theology of the cross as the foundational motif for his contextual theological project. However, this is

merely an apparent distinction since, as James Cone has observed, the liberation of the oppressed also involves liberation of the oppressors—from enslavement to their illusions.<sup>8</sup> Hall's work seeks to liberate persons in the dominant, privileged culture of North America from enslavement to their illusions. Nevertheless it is one thing to practice liberation theology in a context of oppression (i.e. in and for Latin American, black or feminist communities) while another approach entirely is needed in a context of privilege such as the North American dominant culture. Why is the theology of the cross appropriate to the North American context?

The dominant culture of North American society presents Christians with a "problematique" according to Hall's analysis.<sup>9</sup> North American culture is blinded by an ideology of optimism, he argues, which derives from an image of humanity (*imago hominis*) conceived as master, and also from a deterministic view of historical progress. The claim to mastery (the assertion that one has the power to do whatever one wills believing that power to be immediate and ultimate) combined with the belief in unlimited historical progress (a secularized version of the doctrine of divine providence) during the period of the Enlightenment.<sup>10</sup> This influential combination of ideas has resulted in a condition of blind optimism within traditional North American culture. Because this is a *blind* optimism, however, contemporary North Americans may fail to discern the very real darkness which confronts them.

Unlike the European existentialists who have given a profound account of the modern experience of darkness and of the meaning of events represented by names such as Auschwitz, Hiroshima or Vietnam, North American culture has seemed unwilling to fully appreciate the dark side of modern historical experience. Moreover the dominant culture of North America today seems unable to discern the darkness of the global dilemma which so urgently presses upon us: the ecological crisis, the nuclear threat, the cries of peoples from the so-called "Third World", along with the voices of scientists, economists, social scientists, prophets and poets all would convey a message to North Americans, i.e. that we must limit ourselves or else we shall be limited.<sup>11</sup> For a society that was assured of the possibility of limitless optimism and the need to always think positively it is difficult to countenance the notion of such an

“omega factor” as Hall describes without falling into despair.<sup>12</sup> And so, Hall proposes that Christians are called on to attempt to enable North Americans to “enter the darkness” with the aid of an indigenous theology of the cross.<sup>13</sup>

There are of course some sensitive persons within the context of North American society who do not cling to the culture’s shallow optimism and consequently are able to discern the real darkness which confronts us. Hall writes of the “existentialism of the streets”: social protest movements, philosophers, artists, writers, intellectuals and activists who are critical of the official optimism of the dominant culture. With Tillich, Hall affirms this “protesting element in contemporary culture [as] theologically significant.”<sup>14</sup> Because these persons are released from their illusions regarding human mastery—especially through modern technological prowess—they are a sign of hope for our age. Christians need to be truly concerned with these sensitive persons who are able to entertain the experience of limits without being broken by it. These persons are not in need of “answers” from the church, so much as a place to which they may refer their questions.<sup>15</sup> To them, the “bourgeois transcendence” (Käsemann) offered by the established church is a false *skandalon*, an offence based on a triumphalist theology of glory. They also perceive Christian triumphalism as the superficial response to the human condition which it is: in today’s context, the triumphalist proclamation of Jesus has “all the depth of a singing commercial.”

“They find a faith incomprehensible that heals the wounds of [humanity] lightly. So does God himself, if we can believe the Scriptures.”<sup>16</sup>

Hall asserts that persons such as this are the measuring stick—the canon—by which Christians may ascertain the contextual relevance of the proclamation of the Gospel today.<sup>17</sup>

According to Hall’s analysis, the dominant culture of North America is in a state of crisis. The optimism which was derived from the image of humanity begotten in the Enlightenment has shown itself to be untenable in the face of the dark events of modern history and the global crises of our age. Moreover the established church has been so wedded to this dominant culture that it allowed the Christian message to be reduced to merely a stained-glass version of the dominant cultural optimism. Thus

it is questionable whether an authentic message could even be heard from the established church, or whether it would be able to discover such a message. Meanwhile, a profound disillusionment is taking hold of North American society today. We are becoming a "society in despair", writes Hall, even though that despair is typically repressed; indeed "our greatest despair is that we cannot admit our despair."<sup>18</sup> The extremity depicted in this cultural analysis, however, constitutes an invitation to theology and to the church: if the Christian church is able to dissociate itself from its past function of serving as the cultic buttress to the positive outlook of the dominant culture, it may be able to offer an authentic response to that invitation. What our culture needs is to discover a way of being truthful—to the world and to ourselves—and at the same time to maintain hope.<sup>19</sup> In order for the church today to form a response which could enable persons in our society to face the truth of our real predicament and also to discover hope that goes far deeper than superficial optimism, Hall contends that Christians in our context must become attentive to a neglected resource of our tradition—the theology of the cross.

### The Theology of the Cross

Hall views the theology of the cross from a number of vantage points. He is consistent, however, in his presentation of the theology of the cross as contextual by its very nature.

In common with Luther, Hall views the theology of the cross as comprehending the whole spectrum of Christian theology. The theology of the cross is not one particular doctrine to be treated as yet another subsection of systematic theology. Hall cites Moltmann's description: "The *theologia crucis* is not a single chapter in theology, but the key signature for all Christian theology."<sup>20</sup> It refers to "a spirit and a method, a way of conceiving of the *whole* content of the faith and the task of theology."<sup>21</sup> As such, the theological endeavour itself is cruciform:

"The theology of the cross can never be a brilliant statement about the brokenness of life; it has to be a broken statement about life's brokenness, because it participates in what it seeks to describe."<sup>22</sup>

Again as with Luther, Hall elaborates much of his view of the theology of the cross in terms of a theology of incarnation.

The cross stands first and foremost for the human condition, corporate and individual, including the realities of suffering, oppression, pain and death. Thus conceived, the cross is a human phenomenon; the way of the cross belongs to humanity as "our way".<sup>23</sup> This understanding of the cross in human terms is not diminished in Hall's *theology* of the cross, as he begins to describe the cross as the locus of divine involvement in the human condition:

The theology of the cross declares *God* is with you—Emmanuel. *He* is alongside you in your suffering. *He* is in the darkest place of your dark night. You do not have to look for him in the sky, beyond the stars, in infinite light, in glory unimaginable. He is incarnate. That means he has been crucified.<sup>24</sup>

Thus in Hall's view the basic orientation of the theology of the cross is incarnational, "the identification of God with humankind in the totality of the human condition."<sup>25</sup>

Hall sees the "this worldly" contextual emphasis of the theology of the cross as deriving from the wider "tradition of Jerusalem", which includes the Hebrew Scriptures as well as contemporary Judaism. He underscores the statement of Bonhoeffer: "This world must not be written off; in this the Old and New Testaments are one."<sup>26</sup> A commitment to the "this worldly" creation is a hallmark of ancient as well as modern Judaism (evident, for example, in the writings of Emil Fackenheim), and Hall's theology of the cross partakes of this same commitment.

Moreover the Jewish tradition's affirmation of the suffering of God in and with the suffering of humankind also informs Hall's view of the theology of the cross. He sees the Hebraic tradition as fundamentally committed to humanity, including the human experience of suffering:

"It would not be an exaggeration of the earnestness of this tradition's commitment to realism to say that the reality of human suffering is the thing to which biblical faith clings most insistently."<sup>27</sup>

The connection must be maintained between the Hebraic understanding of the "pathos of Yahweh" and the passion of Christ (*passio Christi*) in Christianity, such a connection proving a salutary corrective to the other-worldliness of Christian orthodoxy.<sup>28</sup> Not only the divine suffering, but also the suffering of contemporary Jews in the Holocaust needs to be fully

appreciated in the working out of a theology of the cross in our day.

The final product of Christian triumphalism was Auschwitz. To learn the true theology of the cross, we Christians have to return to Auschwitz and trace our progress from a militant theology of resurrection triumph to the captains of the death factories.<sup>29</sup>

To take this world seriously and to take human experience (including suffering) seriously—these are essential aspects of Hall's view of the theology of the cross. The contextuality of Hall's theology of the cross is here evident in his awareness of the capacity of this world and of human experience to function as the arena of divine activity. Hall shares the insight which has been expressed in Lutheran eucharistic theology in the phrase *finitum capax infiniti* (the finite [is] capable of the infinite).<sup>30</sup> (Hall's version of this phrase is "the extraordinary-within-the-ordinary."<sup>31</sup>) Paradoxically, Hall's commitment to this world and to the full range of human experience also allows him to express his theological commitment. The theology of the cross is a statement about the human condition which testifies to "the *assumption* of the human condition by the One who created and creates out of nothing."<sup>32</sup> Focussing on the creation, Hall would have us encounter the Creator; focussing on the *civitas terrena* (the earthly city), Hall would have us discover the God who comes to us in one of the inhabitants of that city, Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed for Hall the paradigm of the theology of the cross is found in Jesus' identification with every dimension of human experience, including suffering. This thoroughly incarnational view exemplifies what Luther saw as the true theology, which

"comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."<sup>33</sup>

Integral to a theology of the cross must be an unflinching determination to be true to human experience. Beyond the "childish categories" (Heidegger) of optimism and pessimism, beyond fatalistic resignation and quietist withdrawal, Hall's theology of the cross counsels honesty with respect to the human context.<sup>34</sup>

"Surely the point of the theology of the cross is that [one] does not have to falsify what [one] finds in life by way of darkness and failure."<sup>35</sup>



This unqualified commitment to honesty makes Hall's theology of the cross as insightful and compelling as other contemporary contextual theologies.

Indeed Hall's theology of the cross is perhaps an exception in that he steadfastly refuses to mitigate the darkness in human experience for the sake of any theological or ecclesiastical agenda. There is no "realized eschatology" here, no catering to those who demand a premature reassurance of Christian triumph. The theology of the cross is by definition skeptical of triumphs, declares Hall, especially theological ones.<sup>36</sup> He particularly disdains the identification of the biblical view of God's triumph in Christ with the white patriarchal triumphalism so clearly evidenced in Western history.<sup>37</sup> Over against our tradition of triumphalism, what is needed is to "let the Crucified and not the bourgeois culture... define his triumph."<sup>38</sup> Especially in light of the church's triumphalist history, the prospect of articulating the meaning of God's triumph in Christ presents a serious problematic for the theology of the cross. The only triumph which Hall admits as credible in the face of an honest awareness of the human condition is a victory *sub contraria specie* as Luther termed it, "hidden beneath its opposite"—a victory discernable only by faith, not sight.<sup>39</sup> Such a faith—one that is able to coexist with the doubt and negation in human experience—is antithetical to every form of Christian triumphalism. It offers rather

"a vantage point from which to *engage* the negative: to engage it, not to overcome it. To live with and in it, not to displace it with a theoretically unassailable positive."<sup>40</sup>

On the basis of this faith, Hall suggests an alternative message which derives from that "thin tradition" of Christianity—that "discordant antiphon" to the triumph song of Christendom—the tradition of the theology of the cross.<sup>41</sup>

Alongside of its ecclesiastical triumphalism, Christendom has historically exhibited what Hall terms "kerygmatic triumphalism", perhaps a more subtle enemy of the theology of the cross.<sup>42</sup> As an alternative, Hall proposes bringing to the fore a message of the solidarity of Jesus with the human condition, particularly with the human experiences of suffering, hopelessness and failure.

A victory that left Christ among us, one of us, hurt enough by life to lead us through the valley of the shadow of death. A victory

that did not annul his defeat or leave the cross "empty", a void, meaningless symbol. A victory that did not remove him from the beggarliness, brokenness and failure of our own condition.<sup>43</sup>

Indeed from the perspective of the theology of the cross a test of authenticity would be whether our kerygma images a Jesus who understands failure, who indeed participates in *our* failure.<sup>44</sup> Such a kerygma seeks to demonstrate meaning within the darkness which is an inescapable part of human experience: "in the midst of failure, a way; in the midst of darkness, light; in the midst of despair, hope."<sup>45</sup>

Even the doctrine of the resurrection can provide no triumphalist haven. Hall views the resurrection as a proleptic triumph which does not lead to a present *securitas* in which victory is a foregone conclusion, but rather creates in us a surprising hope which is based on sheer grace alone.<sup>46</sup> Hall will not admit a use of the resurrection so as to detract from Jesus' involvement in the reality of the human situation symbolized by the cross. "The cross of the world... remains after all the Easter sermons have been preached and all the Hallelujahs sung."<sup>47</sup> Christians ought not to speak about the resurrection in such a way as to imply that the human condition of brokenness, into which Jesus has entered unreservedly, has been surpassed. Hall cites with approval Käsemann's description of the resurrection as "a chapter in the theology of the cross, not its supersession."<sup>48</sup>

Hall's theology of the cross is contextual because it is rooted throughout in the on-going identification of Jesus with the human context, including its darkness. The theology of the cross, then, cannot be presented as an "answer" to the human condition in which it is involved. It does not provide answers such as we are accustomed to receiving. Instead, the "answer" of the theology of the cross is paradoxical: it leads us to an "Answerer [who] brings more questions than answers."<sup>49</sup> The "answer" of the theology of the cross is "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2), and the sharing of our human life with him.

The answer is not the words as such but the living Word—the Presence itself. The answer is the permission that is given in this Presence to be what one is, to express the dereliction that belongs to one's age and place, to share all of it with this Other... Faith is the communion of the spirit with this fellow sufferer, this One whose otherness lies in the fact that he will not turn away in the face of one's failure, or the failure of one's world.<sup>50</sup>

There are, however, two creative implications that arise from this "answer" of the theology of the cross.

One implication lies in the area of ethics, especially social ethics. Often the charge has been made that the theology of the cross leads to passive resignation before the *status quo* and to ethical quietism. Certainly it is true that in Western history this theology has at times been associated with individualistic pietism and other-worldliness, resulting in a lack of social concern or even actual justification of oppressive powers in society on the part of the church. (In the Lutheran tradition, at times the so-called "two kingdoms" theory has also been understood in such a way that it provided a rationale for lack of political and social involvement.) However, Hall argues that neglect of ethical concern is by no means inherent in the theology of the cross. Instead there is an ethic which stem directly from the theology of the cross *per se*—an ethic of solidarity with humankind. Over against systems of ethics which derive from concepts of natural law, the ethic of the theology of the cross begins with the identification of God with the human condition in Jesus. Indeed, what could be more pregnant with ethical implications than the divine entrance into solidarity with human suffering and oppression!<sup>51</sup> This incarnational basis not only makes for a truly contextual theology, it also provides a foundation for a contextual ethic. Moreover, such an ethic is more than hypothetical or speculative: it begins rather with

the subjection of the Christian and the Christian koinonia to the experience of the cross. Not once only, but in a "continuous baptism". The beginning of the *ethic* of the cross is the identification of this people with the Crucified One.<sup>52</sup>

Echoing Luther's *Small Catechism*, Hall delineates an ethic based on the praxis of solidarity with Jesus, who is seen as being in solidarity with suffering humanity.

The theology of the cross also has implications for the area of ecclesiology. As was evident above, Hall contends that the ethic of the theology of the cross has meaning for the Christian koinonia as identification with the Crucified in its actual experience (a "continuous baptism").

"Real solidarity with those who suffer recognizes that their condition is our own: we are all beggars together."<sup>53</sup>

Hall's use of the image of beggars derives from the words of the dying Luther: "we are beggars; this is true." Hall terms

the theology of the cross a "theology of beggars", and contends that this theology should inform our ethics—and our ecclesiology.<sup>54</sup>

It would be fair to claim that ecclesiology has been a primary focus of attention in Hall's theological project, commencing already with his doctoral dissertation which was entitled *The Suffering of the Church*. Many of his writings feature a thorough and relentless critique of the Christian church in the West, which has been allied to privilege and social eminence since the establishment of the church as the official state religion by the Roman emperors Constantine and Theodosius I in the fourth century C.E. This socially privileged Christendom has now begun its demise, and Christians in our day are well on the way to becoming a minority (*diaspora*) within Western society. (Hall elaborated this theme in detail in his 1988 Lutheran Life Lectures.<sup>55</sup>) Overtly, this *ecclesia crucis* (church of the cross) which is coming to be seems rather lacklustre compared with the previous glorious triumphs of Christendom. The church today possibly faces

the necessity of witnessing enormous quantitative reductions in church membership, finances, and influence, without regarding this as defeat; the prospect of experiencing lower standards of living, restrictions of personal and communal freedom, and even hunger, famine, and catastrophe, without despair. In short, the loss of those expectations which we have been taught to have... without losing hope.<sup>56</sup>

However, this "humiliation of the church" (van den Heuvel) is no cause for great lamentation. Rather, Hall sees this as the great opportunity for the church to become what is imaged in the Gospels in terms such as salt, yeast, light and a little flock. The mission of the church today consists in embracing reduction to nothing, beggarliness and brokenness, in order to be in real solidarity with suffering humanity.<sup>57</sup> In this solidarity, the Christian community may discover its mission to be that of Jesus the Crucified.

Rather than continuing as the "official religion of the officially optimistic society" of North America's dominant culture, the task of the *ecclesia crucis* in this society would be to announce the prophetic word: "The day of the Lord is darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18). Moreover, Christians today are called to accompany persons in our society into an honest

awareness of our collective darkness. In a memorable passage, Hall uses the image of a midwife to illustrate the role of the church in our society: even as a midwife “lives through” the birthing process with an expectant mother, so the church is to identify with the changes experienced in our society as we enter into the darkness together. Attentive to the signs of the “birth pangs” of God’s “labour” in the world, the minority church will seek to be a community in dialogue with persons in our society, to demonstrate solidarity with the oppressed and to practice stewardship of our natural environment, thereby preparing for the coming of the new creation.<sup>58</sup>

In sum, the Christian ecclesia must again know itself to be cruciform in its theology, its proclamation, and its life in society. It must exhibit once again the mark of suffering, which Luther saw as the essential mark of the true church.<sup>59</sup> Only a Christian community which knows the cross and the night of humanity in its own experiences may have the right to announce the dawn.<sup>60</sup>

Douglas John Hall’s contextual theology of the cross has tremendous relevance for Lutherans in the Canadian context. Hall reminds us that our context stands in need of the theology of the cross, and also that the nature of this theology itself obliges us to become involved in our cultural milieu. Not only is the theology of the cross central to the Lutheran theological tradition, it must also provide our *raison d’être* today: the theology of the cross is indispensable for the life of the Lutheran church in our contemporary context. Douglas Hall urges the church to embody this theology in all aspects of its life and its mission in the world. His writings summon the church to discern the *via crucis* (way of the cross) in our context and to walk therein, that the church may follow in the steps of its Crucified Lord.

## Assessment

Having surveyed Hall’s treatment of the theology of the cross, I would wish to offer some brief critical observations.

Hall’s writings communicate a great sense of enthusiasm for the theology of the cross. His writing style makes liberal use of italics, interjections and exclamations in order to express his passionate engagement with his subject matter. Thus Hall’s

writings are a refreshing and stimulating change from what is commonly found in academic theological works. With a zestful eloquence that is rare Hall describes for his readers the way of proclaiming and embodying the theology of the cross in our contemporary context.

To present the theology of the cross as contextual theology is tremendously significant. It is a task that derives from the insight that theologians can no longer assert an unqualified claim to speak for all persons at all times in all situations. This insight has admittedly not been much in evidence in the long history of Christendom. The realization that a *theologia eterna* is both impossible to attain and methodologically dishonest has been a fairly recent development. Nevertheless, in order to come fully to terms with their context theologians are obliged to make use of all possible means which are available.

Hall's analysis of the North American context is quite consistent throughout his writings: he keeps returning to such themes as the failure of our ideology of optimism, the rediscovery of historic evil in the horrific events of our century, the demise of the Constantinian model of the church, the rise of religious pluralism, the ecological and nuclear crises, etc. These themes are constituent elements of Hall's view of the North American context. However, it would be possible to achieve a more thoroughgoing analysis of North American society and culture by using, for example, the methods of the social sciences. A more complete analysis of the North American context would require an examination of the structures of economic, political, cultural, and ecclesiastical institutions in our society. While such an analysis would certainly include detailing the crises that face North Americans (as Hall does), it would also focus on the public policies that address those crises as well as the systems that perpetuate them. Such an analysis of the way our society functions on its various levels would depend greatly on statistical research and other methods of the social sciences. These methods may seem foreign to the theologian's own area of expertise but they are nevertheless indispensable if we are to arrive at a more adequate understanding of our context.

Hall's contemporary approach to the theology of the cross is particularly significant to those of us who cherish the tradition of the *theologia crucis*. It is especially an appropriate response

in an age such as ours when triumph and victory do not characterize the experience of many, perhaps most. However, as one reads Hall's writings one feels that the *concept* of the incarnation is given more prominence than the actual person of the Incarnate One who is described in the four Gospel accounts. Hall resoundingly asserts a Christology "from below" in which the central feature is Jesus' complete identification with the human condition. This is especially meaningful when Jesus is affirmed as identifying with suffering and oppressed persons today. However, one would ask how does Jesus' contemporary identification with humankind relate to his historical life almost twenty centuries ago? Using the insights of biblical criticism to obtain as true a picture as possible of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, we may ask how does the historical Jesus inform our understanding of his identification with persons today? If by faith Christians believe that God is encountered *sub contraria specie* in the historical Jesus, how do the specific contours and details of his life *then* affect our understanding of his involvement with humankind *today*? If we fail to pay heed to the life of the historical Jesus we run the risk of substituting a mere concept of the incarnation for the flesh-and-blood person of Jesus who is also *vere homo* (true man) in his dealings with humankind today.

Of course this latter point relates to the question of the place of faith in Hall's treatment of the theology of the cross. At its heart *Christian* faith is not evoked by *theologoumena*—theological concepts or statements—but rather through the means of grace. At best we could say that Hall treats the subjects of faith and the means of grace only in passing. Yet the nature of Christian faith which comes through the down-to-earth, physical acts of hearing the Word, being washed in baptism and eating and drinking at the Lord's Table implies that faith itself is inherently incarnational, i.e. that it pertains directly to the theology of the cross. Similarly Hall does not describe the work of the Holy Spirit except in passing. Yet these are tremendously important themes for any discussion of the theology of the cross, for only the resources of Christian faith and the action of the Holy Spirit can preserve us from turning the theology of the cross into another form of legalism. Only our faith and the work of the Spirit can prevent Hall's vision of the cruciform church—the *ecclesia crucis*—from being merely idealistic or pathetic. For it is only by trusting in

the Incarnate One whose Spirit is at work among us that the Christian ecclesia can take up the cross of loving service of oppressed and suffering persons and so walk in the steps of its Lord.

## Notes

- 1 Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989) 75.
- 2 Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman, ed., *New Theology No. 9* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).
- 3 Douglas John Hall, "Theology is an Earth Science", in Mary Jo Leddy and Mary Ann Hinsdale, ed., *Faith That Transforms: Essays in Honor of Gregory Baum* (New York: Paulist, 1987) 100.
- 4 Douglas John Hall, *The Future of the Church: Where are We Headed?* (United Church Publishing House, 1989) 59–63, 99–101. The phrase "tradition of Jerusalem" derives from the Canadian philosopher George Grant.
- 5 Cited in Douglas John Hall, "The Diversity of Christian Witnessing in the Tension Between Subjection to the Word and Relation to the Context" in Peter Manns and Harding Meyer, ed., *Luther's Ecumenical Significance: An Interconfessional Consultation* (Philadelphia: Fortress/New York: Paulist, 1984) 257; Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 108; Hall, "Theology is an Earth Science", 105.
- 6 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 83.
- 7 Hall, "Theology is an Earth Science", 104–105.
- 8 James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970) 185–186.
- 9 "Problematic" is a favourite term of Hall's, which he defines as "a whole battery of interrelated and mutually complicating 'problems' [which] work together to form a kind of network of 'problematic' reality." Cf. Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986) 23n.
- 10 Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness: Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) 46–47. Hall relies here on the cultural analysis of George Grant. Cf. George P. Grant, *Time as History* (Toronto: CBC, 1969) and George P. Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age* (Vancouver: Copp Clark, 1966) ch. IV.
- 11 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 195.
- 12 Ibid. 61.
- 13 Ibid. 16, 213.
- 14 Cited in Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 167.
- 15 Ibid. 209.
- 16 Ibid. 141, 143.
- 17 Ibid. 142.



- 18 Douglas John Hall, *The Reality of the Gospel and the Unreality of the Churches* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 176; Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 172. Cf. the discussion of "Despair, Canadian Style" in Douglas John Hall, *The Canada Crisis: A Christian Perspective* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1980) 58-67.
- 19 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 178.
- 20 Cited in Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 105; Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 25.
- 21 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 118.
- 22 Ibid. 117.
- 23 Ibid. 150.
- 24 Ibid. 149.
- 25 Douglas John Hall, "Rethinking Christ" in Alan T. Davies, ed., *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1979) 181.
- 26 Cited in Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 28.
- 27 Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 27.
- 28 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 27.
- 29 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 238n2. Cf. Hall, "Rethinking Christ"; Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 210-213.
- 30 Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 93.
- 31 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 329.
- 32 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 149.
- 33 From the Heidelberg Disputation (1518), theses 20 and 21, cited in Hall, *Lighten our Darkness* 119. This passage is for Hall a *locus classicus* from Luther's writings, to which he returns frequently.
- 34 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 150.
- 35 Ibid. 142.
- 36 Ibid. 155. Cf. for example Hall's critique of the "triumph of grace" (G.K. Berkouwer's phrase) in Barth's theology, Ibid. 139-140.
- 37 Ibid. 210.
- 38 Ibid. 223.
- 39 Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 107.
- 40 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 209.
- 41 Hall, "Rethinking Christ", 168, 177; Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 115.
- 42 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 204.
- 43 Ibid. 213.
- 44 Ibid. 212.
- 45 Ibid. 213.
- 46 Hall, "Rethinking Christ", 183; Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 145; Hall, *Reality of the Gospel*, 165.
- 47 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 121.
- 48 Cited in *ibid.* 143, 123.
- 49 Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 118.

- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 151.
- 52 Ibid. 152.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid. 117. Hall often cites Luther's final written words in German ("Wir sind Bettler, dass ist wahr"). However, Heinrich Bornkamm records them as a mixture of German and Latin: "Wir sind Bettler; hoc est verum". Cf. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958) 291 and Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements: Vol. 2 The Reformation* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971) 355.
- 55 The substance of these lectures has been included in sections II and III of Hall, *The Future of the Church*.
- 56 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 144-145.
- 57 Ibid. 152.
- 58 Hall, *The Canada Crisis*, 96-98, 105-113.
- 59 Hall, *Future of the Church*, 104.
- 60 Hall, *Lighten our Darkness*, 221.